THE MAKING OF MEXICAN AMERICA

TRANSATIONAL NETWORKS IN THE RISE OF MASS MIGRATION 1900-1940

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ABSTRACT

The Making of Mexican America

Transnational Networks in the Rise of Mass Migration 1900-1940

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Despite being the largest migratory movement between two states in modern history, the origins and operation of Mexican migration to the United States has not been a major research topic. We lack a comprehensive view of Mexican migration as it was established in early twentieth century and reproduced throughout the century as a system that reached from Texas borderlands to California and to western agricultural regions and beyond to Midwestern farming and industrial areas, a system that continued to be circular in nature even as permanent settlement increased, and which was in constant interaction with families, villages, and towns throughout Mexico.

This interdisciplinary, bilingual, and transnational project is one of the first histories of the creation of migrant networks narrated from multiple geographic and institutional sites, analyzing the relationship between state agents, civic organizations, and migrants on both sides of the border. My project utilizes a statistical analysis of migration trends combined with qualitative research in order to show how migration arose as a mass phenomenon in Mexico and extended into the United States. This dissertation argues that large scale Mexican migration was created and operated through an interconnected transnational migrant economy made up of self-reinforcing local economic logics, information diffusion, and locally based social networks. I

demonstrate that town-based interpersonal networks formed the engine that propelled and sustained large scale migration. Migrants needed transportation, capital, and information to travel north. Town-based networks provided all of these things.

I follow the spread of migrant routes, explaining the creation of Mexican communities in the US Showing why communities were located where they are and their links to the larger economy of migrant labor before turning to Mexico and showing the effects of migration on sending communities. Migration evolved from a wave of mainly men into a broad based phenomenon, drawing in families and communities through remittances. I argue this is because a set of self-reinforcing economic logics were being created on both sides of the border. These logics are separate, but linked to the economic conditions that framed migration- the pull of the industrialization of the American West and the Mexican north with its relatively high wages- and the push of the chaos and violence of the Mexican revolution and Cristero Wars. Likewise, these logics could not have occurred without the demographic pressures of population growth in central Mexico, and the economic transformations of the Porfiriato. As more and more people participated in migration, they sent back information and remittances, which in turn made it easier for others to follow their path. Circular migration reinforced this dynamic as migrants returned home on a large scale, bringing back knowledge and experience. Together, these practices constituted the migrant economy and made central and central-north Mexico the engine of migration in the twentieth century. This new economy made it easier to move, but also tied many families and towns into continuous migrations in order to achieve economic stability. Ultimately this project shows the creation of the political economy of migrant labor between Mexico and the United States.

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I became interested in writing Latino History while an undergraduate at the University of Chicago. A long way away from the barrio I grew up in, over time I spent more time involved in the city, education programs, and immigrant communities. In the city I became involved in activism for immigrant rights, and to my surprise found support for my interests in the history department. Through the Mellon-Mays Undergraduate Fellowship I found a community of students, and was able to work with Kathleen Conzen, Emilio Kouri, and Sarah Osten on immigrant research in Chicago. Later thanks to the advisement of Ramon Gutierrez I was able to turn that initial research into a thesis that became the kernel for this project.

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This project began on the road, staring at the landscape of Mexico as a child. I grew up in Azusa, California in a home that knew the meaning of migration. My parents came without documents, and had been deported on a few occasions, as have many of my relatives. Once they obtained documentation from the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act in the mid-1990's, they began not only to send money back to Mexico as they had always done, but to travel there as well. Going to Mexico and then to Chicago every few months opened up a world of Mexican communities. There I learned that my maternal grandfather had been a Bracero as had most of the men in his town, Villa Juarez. That my fraternal grandmother was American born but had been deported in the 1930s, and that my great-grand parents had been migrants in the 1910s. It is to the story of my grandparents, especially my grandmother Mariana Gonzales-Morales, that this manuscript is dedicated. Finally, I wish to thank my loving and supporting family, my parents Maria Socorro & Felipe Morales, my brothers David and Philip Morales, my nephews Philip, Issac, and Daniel David, and my fiancé Heng Rui Wang.

Dedicated to my Grandparents

Mariana Gonzalez Morales

Fermín Ramón Morales Hernandez

&

Maria Juana Martinez Ramírez

Jose Jesús Martinez Rodríguez

INTRODUCTION

Transnational Networks in the Rise of Mass Migration

Today the church of Santa Gertrudis de la Carbonera is in the best condition it has been in centuries. The church sits on one side of a recently renovated town plaza in Villa Juarez, San Luis Potosí. The town is mostly empty, and the fields mostly fallow. About five thousand people call the town home, but the town should be larger, more than fifteen thousand people from the municipality have left. More than two-thirds of the people are in the United States. Almost of the men who life there today have been in United States, from old braceros who sit in the plaza sharing stories, to the political leadership in all three parties (PRI, PAN, PT) active in town. Migration from the town began during the Mexican Revolution, continued through the Bracero program, the 1960s, 70s and 80s and continues till this day. To listen to the people in the town talk is to listen to the history of Mexican migration in the twentieth century.

Every November, when the town saint is commemorated, until January 6th, the town fills with families from el Norte. While the number of people participating in the yearly return has fallen since the start of Mexico's Drug War, license plates from California, Texas, Illinois, and beyond testify to the spread of the town's migrants. Their success is shown in the cars, consumer goods, and remittances they bring back, and in the large houses that line the city streets, the rewards for long labor in America's hardest jobs. These, of course are the successful migrants, many others do not have as much to display. The migrants of the town created a hometown association, which helped to fund the improvements of the plaza, and their money made the restoration of the church possible.

In listening to the history of the town and the history of the migration of its people, I was struck by how similar it was to stories I had heard in towns across the state and in Guanajuato. In researching the history of the area, spending time in Cerritos, Villa Juarez, Rio Verde, Cardenas, and many smaller towns and villages in between, it became clear to me that the history of the area, the history of land, intimately tied to the history of migration. The now defunct railroad station at Cerritos carried ores, corn, and goods to distant markets, but also generations of people east to Tampico and north to the United States. The history of migration in the 20th century is the history of what happened in these places, and the places that the progeny of these communities went to.[1]

It was at this time that I sensed a disconnect between the history of migration and the history of Mexican-American communities in the United States, and the ways in which people in these communities described their own experiences of migration. Many of the histories center on the role and action of the United States government, rightly showing the ways in which policy shaped the experiences of migrants and marginalized ethnic communities. A separate scholarship has focused on how immigrants fared over time, and has primarily revolved around questions of adjustment, acculturation, assimilation, and identity. Both frameworks are primarily interested in the United States.

In the last twenty years, but especially the last decade, "transnationalism" has offered scholars a language to speak about history that is neither state centered (international) or state bounded (national). Unlike "diaspora", which concerns communities formed by people dispersed

[1] There are many histories of this region, about the Mexican peasantry, land, local political movements, but historians have generally ignored migration and its impact. Exceptions include Fernando Saúl Alanis Encinos, *Que se queden allá: El gobierno de México y la repatriación de mexicanos en Estados Unidos* (El Colegio de San Luis, 2007); Deborah Cohen, *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Postwar United States and Mexico* (Chapel Hill, NC: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2011).

from a common homeland, or "borderlands" which connotes a fixed space, transnationalism encompasses people and places that at first may seem to share little in common- Agrarian rebels and Catholic exiles, from the Guanajuato Bajío to the fields of Michigan- but shared a common story of migration. They engaged in a common currency of exchange-- experience, information, remittances and consumer items that linked places and communities across time and space. By expanding the field of analysis across borders, this study captures the ways transnational practices and ties shaped communities in both Mexico and the United States, a transnational methodological framework then, allowed me to tell the story of the beginning of Latin American migration to the United States. Although sociologists and anthropologists have offered transnational analysis of contemporary migrations from Mexico, historians have been much slower to do so.[2] There are various reasons for this, ranging from the project of creating Chicano histories as a form of US history, to the strength of the community study as a form in Latino History, to the strength of a nationalist historiography in Mexico.

The First Era of Mass Mexican Migration

In 1900 less than three thousand people migrated from Mexico the US, but by 1910 tens of thousands were traveling in both directions every year, so that by the Great Depression one million Mexicans lived in the United States. The patterns of migration established in the early twentieth century continue till this day. The industrialization of northern Mexico and the

[2] Examples include: Robert Smith, *Mexican New York: Transnational Lives of New Immigrants*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Lynn Stephen, *Transborder Lives: Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon*, (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2007); Seth Holmes and Philippe Bourgois, *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States, First Edition*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013). There are some examples of historical studies: Ana Elizabeth Rosas, *Abrazando El Espíritu: Bracero Families Confront the US-Mexico Border* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2014); Deborah Cohen, *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Postwar United States and Mexico* (Chapel Hill, NC: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2011).

American West, the violence of the Mexican Revolution and the Cristero War, uprooted and displaced millions of people, including half a million who went to the US between 1910 and 1920.

The Mexican Revolution drove migration out from central Mexico on a scale never before seen. Waves of Mexicans went north in these years. Across Mexico 500,000 people traveled north during and immediately after the revolution, the bulk of them into Texas. What had once been young men from haciendas and mines now included families and people from every economic class. The Revolution coincided with an economic boom in the southwest US and hundreds of companies recruited Mexicans in these years. Agents sent information, letters, and post cards -south with returning migrants and recruited at major centers along the border like El Paso.

In 1917 the United States entered World War I. Mass migration from Europe ended with the war, the restrictions of 1917, and Johnson-Reed Act of 1924. In 1917 the Secretary of Labor passed a series of exceptions to immigration restrictions (notably the ban on foreign contact labor), under which 72,000 Mexican workers crossed to the US in three years; most stayed beyond the end of the contract. The 1924 quota law exempted the countries of the western hemisphere, including Mexico from numerical quotas. As a result, hundreds of thousands of Mexican migrants continued to take advantage of the expansion of the US economy though the 1920s.

Yet, while these structural factors framed migration, they do not explain why more people kept migrating, or why people went to the particular locations they did. It also does not adequately explain variations in migration on the ground, how one town could be unaffected while another town several miles away could send thousands of people north. Despite being the

largest migratory movement between two states in modern history, the origins and operation of Mexican migration to the United States has not been a major research topic. Historians have assumed that migration was circular in the 1910s but in the 1920s, especially after 1924 the emphasis is on settlement and emerging communities. The narrative has focused on the settlement of Mexicans from the 1920s to the 1970s, with increasing stories of circular migration and transnational communities among the migrants after 1965.[3] In the last two decades even as more scholars are turning to transnational linkages, the emphasis is still on community formations. We still lack a comprehensive view of Mexican migration as it was established in early twentieth century and reproduced throughout the century as a system that reached from Texas borderlands to California and to western agricultural regions and beyond to Midwestern farming and industrial areas, a system that continued to be circular in nature even as permanent settlement increased, and which was in constant interaction with families, villages, and towns throughout Mexico.

This dissertation argues that large scale Mexican migration was created and operated through an interconnected transnational migrant economy made up of self-reinforcing local economic logics, information diffusion, and locally based social networks. The dissertation begins with a close examination of two states in the heart of migrant-sending Central-North Mexico, Guanajuato and San Luis Potosí. I demonstrate the spread of information through town-based interpersonal networks formed the engine that propelled and sustained large scale migration. Migrants needed transportation, capital, and information to travel north. Town-based

[3] George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Vicki Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998). David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (University of Texas Press, 1987). David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

networks provided all of these things. This work showed that network migration and circular migration were co-dependent and reproduced each other throughout central Mexico.

In spite of the actions of the Mexican government, which tried to limit emigration, the migrant economy drew more and more people into its orbit. Migration evolved from a wave of mainly men into a broad based phenomenon, drawing in families and communities through remittances. I argue this is because a set of self-reinforcing economic logics were being created on both sides of the border. These logics are separate, but linked to the creation of an economy of migrant labor - the pull of the industrialization of the American West and the Mexican north with its relatively high wages, and economic and social instability in Mexico- the push of the chaos and violence of the Mexican Revolution and Cristero Wars. Likewise, these logics could not have occurred without the demographic pressures of population growth in central Mexico, and the economic transformations of the *Porfiriato*. As more and more people participated in migration, they sent back information and remittances, which in turn made it easier for others to follow their path. Circular migration reinforced this dynamic as migrants returned home on a large scale, bringing back knowledge and experience. Within Mexican communities, these practices came to constitute a migrant economy, which made central Mexico the engine of migration in the twentieth century. While central Mexico is the focus of this study, these dynamics also took root in northern Mexico and along the borderlands. This new migrant economy made it easier to move, but also tied many families and towns into continuous migrations in order to achieve economic stability.

The migrant economy is the term I use specifically for Mexico, but it was a transnational phenomenon. This may seem an obvious observation, but scholars have not studied its formation, how it operated, or its ongoing adaptions and reproduction. Communities in Mexico and the

United States were linked to each other in this era to a greater extent than has been acknowledged. I argue that rather than simply coming to the US, much of the historical migration from Mexico was circular in nature and this in turn deeply influenced the development of communities in the US and Mexico. The growth of Mexican and Mexican-American communities, and especially organizations, made it easier not only to live in these places, but to migrate into and out of them. I follow spread of migrant routes explaining the creation of Mexican communities in the US. In Texas, and to a lesser extent Los Angeles, inter-personal networks operated within a world of Mexican civil society- Newspapers, Mexican consulates, and *mutualistas* (mutual-aid societies), which operated as a public sphere. This public sphere, made up of migrants and organizations, used Mexican citizenship as the basis from which to press for civil and social rights. I also argue that this public sphere also facilitated the circulation of information that made it possible for migration to spread out from the Borderlands.

I then turn my attention to the west and Midwest. There I examine how the early labor migration into the railroad and mining industries, and waves of migrants during the Mexican Revolution, transformed into a more lasting circular migration that tied communities across vast spaces. The migrants of the industrial west were the most mobile, and migrants used a common infrastructure to move back and forth. In examining three interconnected industries- Mining, Railroad, and Sugar Beet- I show how these industries became intimately tied to Mexican migration and in turn drove economic logics that became self-reinforcing. What started as company organized recruitment in response to immigration policies and specific labor circumstances, became a self-perpetuating migration as Mexicans established new *colonias* and organizations that ultimately added to an economy of migrant labor. Together, these chapters show how an economy of migrant labor arose across the borderlands, the west, and the Midwest,

in cotton, sugar beets, vegetables, but also railroads, and mining. These industries arose because of this new form of migrant labor, a labor that was increasingly Mexican and segmented from the rest of the U.S. labor market.

In the 1930s the Great Depression and the repatriation drives drove hundreds of thousands of people to return to Mexico. I look beyond the border and government *colonias* to the local communities where most migrants went. Returning migrants vied with others for land and resources. The Great Depression changed but did not fundamentally alter the economy of migrant labor as industries in the US continued to depend on migrant labor. When World War II began, governments on both sides of the border saw an opportunity to realize long sought reforms in Mexican migration, especially achieving labor security for employers and minimal protection for workers. However, in carrying out what became known as the Bracero program, officials relied on relationships already in place in communities. As a result, Braceros came disproportionately from the areas of central Mexico with long experience in migration. In doing so the Mexican government formalized and state sanctioned the political economy of migrant labor.

The Quantitative Study

In order to study the formation, operation, and reproduction of these migration patterns, it was necessary to create a new set of data. Making use of the US Census, Mexican Census, and border and city records, I followed Mexican migration patterns from 1910 to 1940 among 2500 families. I paired this information with Geographic Information Systems (GIS), to show the extent of spatial, social and economic mobility across physical spaces. I tracked migrants back to 1910 and forward to 1940 to establish the trajectory of as many people as possible, ultimately

tracking a thousand families over the entire time period. This study yielded several important findings.

First, circular migration was far more extensive than scholars have accounted for. More than 50% of Mexican migrants went back to Mexico at some point before 1930. This trend was strongest in the Midwest and California, which received the bulk of their migrants from Central Mexico. Internal migration was just as common an experience for migrants in this era. Mexicans circulated within the US with surprising regularity, not only within regional circuits, but across regions and industries. It was common for an agricultural worker in Texas to become a beet worker in Michigan, or a factory worker in California for example. Together, this meant that Circular and Internal migration was the norm for Mexican migrants in this era. Most Mexican migrants to urban centers such as Los Angeles, San Antonio, or Chicago left within ten years. Though significant minorities settled down. Those who did settle were mostly the emerging Mexican-American middle class. These were stable families whose livelihood often depended on servicing Mexican communities. These were people whose place in the economy of migrant communities- running boarding houses, grocery stories, pool halls, saloons, clerks and teachers- made it possible to settle down in one place.

Overall, it appears that there was not a single migration, or type of migration, that could be considered standard, but rather multiple forms. With local and regional circuits overlapping with national and transitional circuits going across the US and back to Central Mexico. Likewise, outcomes, their economic mobility and whether or not a person went back to Mexico, or stayed in one place was highly dependent on where that person fit within the larger economy of migrant labor in the United States.

On Sources and Social History

On the Mexican side I also used local *Salvaconducto* (safe conduct) records, and some remittance records to show how people were migrating north. In conjunction with this quantitative data, I used qualitative sources that focused on the words and actions of migrants to explain the creation of early migration networks across Mexico and the US. Specifically, I used sources from archival collections across Mexico and the United States, that ranged from interviews, oral histories, to letters, ballads, fiction, newspapers, and other writings. These sources showed how migration networks worked on the ground, the ways people used the spread of information to migrate, navigate transnational lives, and make sense of their actions. As a result, the study takes a micro-macro approach, moving between specific locations and larger regions. Over time it became clear that interpersonal networks were they key to explaining how migration functioned.

Historical research into the lives of those who do not have archives has always been a challenge for historians. No single archive, or even group of archives contains the history of Mexican migration. Instead it is found in hundreds of sites across both countries. Therefore, I spent as much time in small towns and isolated collections as I did large institutional archives, or doing quantitative work. I paid attention to corrido collections, family papers, oral history collections, local history collaborations, conducting interviews, and learning to do ethnography. It was through these sources that the voices of migrants came through most clearly. Their words and actions had more agency than they had been given credit for, they were the ones who were shaping migration and expanding the space upon which they operated.

Throughout the text I use the papers of Paul S. Taylor and Manuel Gamio. Taylor was an economist who from 1927-1934 conducted a series of studies on Mexican migration, and whose

interest in agricultural workers spanned many decades and countries. Manuel Gamio was one of the founders of Mexican anthropology, the preeminent scholar of indigenous Mexico in the first half of the twentieth century. With funds from the Social Sciences Research Consul, from 1926-1928 he traveled the United States interviewing Mexican migrants. Contemporaries, they knew of each other's work and frequently corresponded. Their works on Mexican migration remains the most comprehensive account of Mexican-American history of this era. In the eight decades since their works were published, generations of scholars have built on their work. I use their papers, both at the University of California Berkeley's Bancroft Library, as their interview collections still give new and surprising findings. Taylor's papers (and books) are dominated by the views of employers, government agents, and charity organizations, yet in between these views, some of the best accounts of life there are told by the migrants themselves. His collaboration with contemporary researches, in the Department of Statistics, Los Angeles and Chicago, meant that he preserved some of their accounts as well. Gamio's interview process relied more heavily on Mexican communities, on organizations, newspapers, the Mexican consular officials, as a result he had a much higher proportion of labor migrants in his interviews, though he had a large share of stable middle class Mexicans as well. However, it must be kept in mind that their interview collections are not an unbiased source, migrants were often unwilling to speak, or tailored their answers to what Gamio or Taylor wanted to hear about.

Both Gamio and Taylor were primarily concerned with how Mexican and Mexican-Americans fared in the US, while both were strong defenders of Mexican communities, they both believed that most Mexicans did not assimilate and both supported repatriation as the best solution to the crisis of the Great Depression. While I disagree on both counts, their work points to the broad transnational world of people and organizations that existed in the early twentieth

century that has often been missing in more contemporary accounts of this period. They both also recognized the extent to which migration, especially circular migration back to Mexico, played a role in the lives of these people.

While I use a fair amount of institutional sources—the Immigration and Naturalization Service records, the Instituto Nacional de Migración, the Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, along with various government archives—this study is a social history at heart. As such the study is primarily interested in the history of migration as seen and experienced by the people who participated in it. I use institutional records and archives in order to examine the interactions between states and migrants, obviously migrants and the state were in daily contact, yet only a tiny amount of that is recorded into the institutional historical record. Reading the accounts, I was fascinated in the moments when people went outside their structural roles and spoke to each other. By reading against the grain of institutional records we can see how they were acting, reacting, and negotiating with migrants, which in turn tells us how migrants were acting, and reacting to state agents and institutions.

The history of migration shows both the reach and limits of the state in shaping society. The state and its laws is not separate from the society it represents. They shape each other, laws and enforcement of them in particular set the limits of not only the state but the political body, who is included, who is excluded. Nowhere is this truer than in immigration policy, where the exclusion of Latin Americans has pushed many into the "illegal" category, marking them as people outside of the state, while in the state. I am not interested in laws and policy at an abstract or governmental level, but rather in the ways laws and policies exist on the ground. I show how discretion, challenges, negotiation shapes the relationship between migrants and the state; migrants are effected by the law and policy, but the reverse is also true. Law and policy are not

finite categories acting on people, they are and were changed by the ways migrants circumvented and challenged their control. As many scholars have argued, the US border enforcement regime existed primarily to shape migration, not to stop it, to create a cheap, temporary, deportable labor force and put down attempts to change this. Yet, even this was unachievable. The same years that saw the creation of the physical border, the creation of a border patrol, waves of violence against ethnic-Mexicans in the US, the disenfranchisement of communities, saw the largest Mexican migrations up to that time. This migration continued because of and despite the Mexican and US government's attempts to shape and regulate this flow, people found ways to resist at every turn.

In order to illustrate the interplay of economics, policy, and information networks that created and shape mass migration, I gathered information from many different localities in both countries. What emerges from my extensive qualitative and quantitative research is a story of negotiation, as governments, businesses, labor contractors and various other intermediaries contended with the interests and actions of migrants. Town-based interpersonal networks worked in conjunction with a Mexican social world of mutual societies, Catholic churches, businesses, newspapers, and consulates as vehicles for advancing migrants' interests in both Mexico and the US. I explore these dynamics in different places, town networks in San Luis Potosi, remittances in Guanajuato, consuls and newspapers in Texas, the Catholic Church in Colorado, small businesses and personal networks in Chicago, for example. However, this does not mean that these dynamics did not operate in the other locations, they did, instead I chose to highlight different aspects of the migrant economy in each place in order to show how they related to and shaped each other over time.

The economy shaped migration on both sides of the border, but in different ways. I demonstrate that the circular and dynamic settlement trends in the US were based to a significant degree on local economies geared toward servicing seasonal, circular, transient and other temporary migrants. While migrants could and did use transnational networks to find jobs, information, to migrate and support their families, few were able to move up economically. In the Census Study and other records, only those with some form of prior social or economic capital were able to become middle class. In the US this is because the migrant economy led people to jobs outside of the mainstream economy to which Euro-Americans from diverse backgrounds had increasing access, instead Mexicans were given difficult jobs with few opportunities for advancement. In Mexico, by 1930 mass migration began to form its own economy in northern and central Mexico that sustained many local communities while simultaneously tying them into perpetual circular migration with the United States, what I call the migrant economy. In the 1930s the return of hundreds of thousands of people during the depression exasperated conditions, and most migrants returned to a rural life. Many migrated again in later years, for higher wages, but rarely made enough to move into a higher economic class. While migration could and did offer many opportunities for a better life in the United States, for most it was a means to earn a higher wage in order to buy land, to build a house, to raise a family, to continue being part of the community they were from.

The Literature

This project contributes to the cross-disciplinary scholarship on Mexican migration. While the Chicano history literature have often stressed cross border interconnections, the historical scholarship has usually portrayed migration as a precursor to the creation of ethnic

communities in the US Scholars have focused upon the creation Mexican-American identity and on the rise of a political economy that trapped Mexicans/Mexican-Americans as cheap, dependent and deportable labor, casting them as second class citizens outside of the political community. However, both narratives underestimate the continuing influence of circular and internal migrations, and have downplayed the extent to which migrant communities in the US have stayed connected to communities in Mexico. My work shows circular migration back and forth to Mexico was just as critical to the narrative of Mexican-American history. Contrary to conventional understandings that ongoing migration diminished in importance after 1924, it was in fact a constitutive element of Mexican American community formation in the US. As such, it shifts the narrative of Chicano history from one of settlement, to one of migration, displacement, and continuing connections in the 1920's and 1930's, showing how transnational trends continued to affect Mexican communities on both sides of the border.

This study builds on the scholarship of the US-Mexico borderlands. Since the 1920s scholars have pointed to the ways certain places and the people in them remained outside of the control of empires and nation states. Indigenous groups in particular were able to sustain vibrant societies, towns, and confederated empires by playing off colonial powers. Usually this is a declension story, with the rise of the American state in the west and the Mexican State in its north, the arrival of industrial capitalism, the loss of autonomy, the creation of strict borders, and national citizens on each side, and the loss of a world where citizenship, race, and social relations were much more fluid categories than they later became. My research shows the ways in which many of the characteristics that defined the southwest borderlands continued and even expanded in the twentieth century. The region remained the center of cross border connections, as vast numbers of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans lived, worked, and migrated across the region.

Migration across the border continued, as did the crossing of money, goods, ideas, and culture, despite the border. As Mexican migrant networks expanded to the Midwest, those places came to share many of the characteristics of the borderlands.

By tracking the location and socio-economic mobility of migrants across three decades, I build on the scholarship of modern global migration, much of it in sociology and anthropology. They have shown the existence and importance of transnational networks in shaping migration flows, especially in post-1965 Mexican migration. I show that these processes are only not new, but that they have deeply shaped Mexican and Mexican-American communities on both sides of the border. This project pushes the study of Mexican migration back in time, showing how migrant networks first took on a mass character and reacted to state and economic pressures in the early twentieth century. Illustrating the international ties that linked both economies through a transnational labor market, I also reexamine the economic history of US and Mexico in the late 19th and early 20th century, showing the growth of an economy of migrant labor.

The result, is a transnational study that brings Latino and Borderlands history into dialogue with the literature on Global Immigration. My research shows the extent to which Mexican migration was subject to the same forces that drove European and Asian Migration across the world, but points to important limitations. The second industrialization of the late 19th and early 20th century precipitated the largest migrations in human history up to that time. People moved from the peripheries to the core of the new capitalist order. Yet they largely did so along the political lines, migrating from the far reaches of colonial empires to their metropoles. Like European and Asian migration, Mexicans relied on interpersonal-networks to guide migration even as the political situation was unique to each group. Railroad hubs played the role in Mexico that port-cities did in Asia and Europe, acting as sources of information, capital and

transportation. Mexicans circulated back home, much like their European and Asian contemporaries, creating transnational communities supported by a migrant economy.

Yet unlike those groups, the proximity of Mexico to the US, sharing the largest border between the developing and first world, meant that the circulation of goods, remittances, and people across the space of the borderlands was on a much grander scale. The racialization of Mexicans in the US likewise meant that most Mexicans were regulated into an economy of migrant labor outside of the mainstream political and economic structures of the United States.

The title of this work, *The Making of Mexican America*, is not missing a hyphen. More than ten percent of Mexico's population went to the United States in these years, many stayed and build a new world of vibrant communities, many others returned, using their migration to build lives at home, and many did things in between. In doing so they both built a Mexican America in the US-American sense of the term, but they also built a Mexican America in the Latin American sense of the word. A vast space from Chiapas to the upper reaches of the Midwest that Mexicans worked, lived and moved in between. This space was held together through social networks, which expanded the reach of people and communities while keeping them within reach. Building on the work of transnational and cross-border scholarship, I argue that it was the particular relationship between economic transformations, US and Mexican domestic policies, and circular migratory movements that explains how migration became a continuing reality. Ultimately this project is a history of the political economy that created and sustains migration between these two countries.

Chapter Summary

This dissertation comprises seven chapters. The prologue sets the stage, giving an overview of the Mexican economy during the Presidency of Porfirio Diaz (1876-1910), paying particular attention to the creation of the railroad system in central and northern Mexico. In the first chapter, using communities in Guanajuato and San Luis Potosi as the base of my study, I show how industrialization and land patterns, the Mexican revolution, and early migration were reinforced through interpersonal networks in order to drive "migration fever". In the second chapter I use a quantitative study to follow migrants across three decades, showing that migratory circuits between 1910 and 1940 were significantly larger and more influential than has been acknowledged before. The third chapter explores how Mexican migrants navigated governments, local authorities, and businesses that sought to control migration along the Borderlands. I argue that in Mexican communities a public sphere emerged in this era, centered around Spanish language newspapers, Consulates, and *mutalistas* that used Mexican citizenship as the basis for claiming rights. I argue that this public sphere also facilitated the circulation of information that made it possible for migration to spread out from Texas. The fourth chapter examines how a set of interconnected industries- Mining- Railroads- and Sugar Beets became dependent on Mexican labor, and in turn helped to fuel an economy of migrant labor that spread Mexicans out across the West and Midwest. The fifth chapter explains the rise of the migrant economy in central Mexico, as the normalization of circular migration changed communities, making them economically dependent on perpetual migration. The sixth chapter looks at the ways Mexican migrants and their families were affected, but not destroyed, by the Great Depression how repatriation changed arriving communities in Mexico and the ways Mexican-Americans adjusted to deportation. Finally, in the epilogue I argue that in carrying out what the

Bracero Program, Mexican officials formalized and state sanctioned relationships already in place rather than create new structures.

PROLOGUE

Orden y Progreso

The Porfiriato's Economic Transformation of Mexico 1876-1900

Circular migration between Mexico and the United States dates back to the very creation of a political border following the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848. Borderland mobility, however, took on a new dimension in the early twentieth century as hundreds of thousands of people began to participate in migration, mostly from places far from the border. By 1930 one million Mexicans were living and working in the US while tens of thousands were crossing the border in both directions every year. To a large extent, migration arose out of the particular ways the economic transformation of Mexico under the *Porfiriato* created social and political tensions in central and northern Mexico. These tensions not only led many to join the Revolution but also provided [for some] a means of escape. In order to understand migration from central Mexico it is important to examine the social-economic factors that led to it, the Mexican Revolution, and economic changes in northern Mexico.

When Porfirio Díaz became President via coup in 1876, the country had 65 kilometers of working railroad track, something he set out to change. The construction on a Mexico City to Veracruz route had been delayed during the presidencies of Juárez and Lerdo in the ten years prior. Following victory against French occupation, the Juárez administration was careful with foreign investment, allowing only that which did not concede land or strategic positions (such as land along the borders) to foreign interests. As a result, when President Juárez died in 1872, no major railroad concessions had been made to foreign interests. President Lerdo, facing pressure from Mexico's foreign bondholders, granted two large railroad concessions to US investors. The

first a was granted a concession to build the *Ferrocarril Nacional de México* (Mexican National Railway), which went from Mexico City to Nuevo Laredo in south Texas, going through San Miguel Allende, San Luis Potosí, Saltillo, and Monterrey. There were also branch lines through Morelia to Pátzcuaro and El Salto. A second group of investors built upon the earlier planned Tuxpan rail network to build the Ferrocarril Central Mexicano (Mexican Central). This much larger network ran one main line through the sugar areas of Morelos to Mexico City, and another north to Torreón and El Paso where it connected to lines to Chicago. The network also ran a major branch through the Bajío states of Jalisco, Aguascalientes, Michoacán, & Guanajuato; and another branch east to San Luis Potosí and Tampico and then north to Monterrey.[1] The projects in capital, land concessions, and size dwarfed the British backed Interoceanic Railway to Veracruz which has received more attention. Still, the three projects remained mostly on paper until after 1876.

Over the course of thirty years, the *Porfiriato* administration pursued a classically liberal and increasingly positivist agenda that ultimately transformed the country's economy. His administration passed a series of laws that reformed the agricultural, mining, and industrial sectors of the economy meant to reform the economy and society in general along "scientific" lines. In agriculture, his regime supported the expansion of private land ownership over communal lands, the consolidation of land under *hacendados*, and the shifting to commodity crops such as sugar and henequen for export rather than crops for domestic consumption. Across Mexico land holdings became more concentrated as indigenous villages and independent farmers lost land though privatization, consolidation, and outright theft. In mining, oil, and railroad

[1] For a full explanation of the deals that made the railroads, see, John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War*, New Ed edition (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2006). Ch 1.

industries the administration encouraged heavy foreign investment through land and tax concessions, the use of violence and soldiers to create favorable labor conditions, and immigration to new settlements where foreigners would live. Through it all, Porfirio Díaz himself developed a large patronage network that allowed various sectors of society to become part of the system while maintaining ostensible independence. For others the federal *Rurales*, the mounded gendarmerie's, and a modernized army enforced a violent peace. Various rebellions were put down across the periphery, which in the case of the Yaqui amounted to repression and slavery in the Yucatan. In foreign policy, Díaz sought to keep a careful balance between British, German, US and French alliances and investment, and worked to deter foreign interference.[2]

By 1898 Mexico had almost 13,000 kilometers of track, and by 1910 that had increased to 19,000. The completion of the Ferrocarril Nacional de México [see Map 0.1] and the Ferrocarril Central Mexicano [see Map 0.2] in 1888 and 1884 respectively, linked Mexico to foreign markets (the US), creating the connections necessary for goods (and un-intentionally people) to travel deep into both nations. The Mexican Central linked to the Southern Pacific Railway and the Topeka and Santa Fe Railway at Cuidad Juárez/ El Paso, while the Mexican National ended at Laredo where it joined primarily to the Texas-Mexican and the International and Great Northern railways systems. In both cases the bulk of the financial and logistical control lay in the hands of Americans who made agreements with the Porfirian government to build them in exchange for a combination of subsidies and land grants. In the long run these

[2] For longer discussion on the Porfirian administration of Mexico, see: Charles A. Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1990); Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, Volume 1: Porfirians, Liberals, and Peasants, Reprint edition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990). Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States and the Mexican Revolution*, trans. Loren Goldner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War*, New Ed edition (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2006); John H. Coatsworth, *Growth Against Development: The Economic Impact of Railroads in Porfirian Mexico* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004).

railroads led to social tension as companies and *hacendados* came to own most of the land around them, leading to many cases of violence and small revolts.[3] Nevertheless, the initial effect was to vastly increase trade as the Mexican economy grew by 3.7% a year from 1880-1910, while transportation costs fell dramatically and tonnage increased.[4] As Mexico primarily exported minerals, cotton, and other commodities, it came to rely on foreign made technologies in those industries. Meanwhile, the increasing movement of goods, use of wage laborers, and growth of migratory labor inside of Mexico was starting to move certain sectors of the Mexican workforce towards a common labor market with workers in the borderlands.

[3] John Coatsworth, "Railroads, Landholding and Agrarian Protest in the Early Porfirato", Hispanic American Historical Review, LIV (1974), 48-71.

[4] John H. Coastworth, *Growth Against Development: The Economic Impact of Railroads in Porfirian Mexico* (Northern Illinois University Press, 1981)

Map 0.1: The Ferrocarril Nacional de México. Source: Wyncoop Hallenback Crawford Co 1895, New York Public Library Maps Division

Map 0.2: Ferrocarril Central Mexicano. Source: Rand McNalley & Co 1881, New York Public Library Maps Division

Northern Mexico

Many of the economic changes that were transforming the whole country could be seen most clearly in the Mexican north. It was in the north that the economy was most linked to the US, where wages and industrialization were most concentrated, and where migrants first went, as the region became the destination for people from central Mexico. Northern Mexico was long a frontier society, where labor had been mobile, northern cities experienced booms as railroad and industrial hubs for export industries. Ciudad Chihuahua grew from thirteen thousand people to forty thousand. But it was Torreón, center of the cotton growing Laguna region and the main railroad hub of the north, where growth was most impressive. From a village of 200 people in 1890, by 1910 Torreón had 43,000 people. There, various smelters, factories, chemical companies combined with sugar and agricultural processing plants to make a small but strategically important industrial city. At Monterrey, mining and railroads combined to make the city the industrial center of Mexico. Already the largest city in the north, Monterrey grew to 79,000 by the start of the Revolution. Here Americans, British, and Germans firms built factories and smelters, but so did many local families who formed a local elite. The locally owned *Fundidora Mexicana* was as large as those smelters in the city owned by the Guggenheims, French investors, or British. The city also developed a large manufacturing sector with dozens of small and medium sized factories, some aimed at the export economy, but a lot also for the domestic market. [5]

In mining, copper added to the ancient gold and silver mining operations in the region, but brought in a much higher proportion of US capital. These new operations served as the

[5] Dudley Ankerson, *Agrarian Warlord: Saturnino Cedillo and the Mexican Revolution in San Luis Potosí*, 1 edition (DeKalb, Ill: Northern Illinois University Press, 1985), pg 7

framework for Mexican miners to move in much larger numbers north than before.[6] Over time much of the copper industry in Mexico came to operate as one with that of the United States, where a similar mining boom was taking place. In Sonora, the city of Cananea sprouted up to a population of 15,000 people almost overnight. William Greene controlled several logging, railroad and copper companies, in particular the Cananea Consolidated Copper Company (CCCC). Cananea was a typical boom town in the late nineteenth century, drawing thousands of Mexicans from across the country. Fed by railroads that shipped the copper north to Arizona, tens of thousands of tons of copper were shipped from its smelter. The city became home to migrants drawn by the relatively high wages of the mines, in addition to migrants from China and Europe, and US Americans who worked for the company and maintained their own colony.[7] The Kansas City Smelting and Refining Company operated mines in the Sierra Mojada which they shipped to their ore smelter in El Paso Texas via the Mexican National.[8] Elsewhere, the Phelps Dodge Corporation had mines at Moctezuma, from which they shipped ore to their smelters in Bisbee, Arizona.

The most significant example of this trend was The American Smelting and Refining Company (ASARCO) and other Guggenheim owned companies. The company consolidated many Guggenheim interests under a single company that spanned the Mexican north and US West. With dozens of mines and smelters in Mexico, it was the single largest employer in the mining industry. ASARCO operated mines and smelters in San Luis Potosí, Aguascalientes,

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[6] In the 19th Century, Sonoran miners had migrated in large numbers to the US West, especially California until discriminatory laws were passed against them, and Chinese miners.

[7] Samuel Truett, *Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008) Ch 3 & 4.

[8] John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War*, New Ed edition (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2006), pg 137.

Guanajuato, Durango, Chihuahua and even Oaxaca. Additionally, they had mines in Michoacán, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Durango, and other places. In Monterrey they built the largest smelter in Latin America, the *Gran Fundación Nacional Mexicana*. Other Guggenheim interests controlled gold and silver mines in these places. This was in addition to all their holdings in the US west that ranged from smelters in El Paso to the largest mine in the world in Utah. Later the Amalgamated Copper Company would become one more multinational on the list when they combined and purchased many of the remaining independent copper companies in Mexico, including Anaconda and the mines at Cananea. [9] Overall, tens of thousands of people went into the copper industry, in the mines, smelters, and railroads of northern Mexico, and almost none of them were local. As the industry grew it drew its workers primarily from central Mexico, creating a large wage earning workforce accustomed to migrating for industrial jobs.

Meanwhile, in a region with abundant fertile land, the arrival of the railroad, irrigation, large-scale commercial agriculture, and migrant workers could create a spectacular boom. The population of the northern Laguna region increased from 20,000 people in 1890 to almost 200,000 in 1910. What had been a society of small rancheros and sharecroppers quickly became one of *haciendas* which took over the best farm lands. Drawing water from the river Nazas the haciendas grew cotton and guayule, commodities for manufacturing in distant cities, rather than maize.[10] The *hacendados* pushed villages aside and moved to a wage labor system, paying high wages for temporary labor and discarding the workers the rest of the year. Nevertheless, every year upwards of 50,000 seasonal workers came to the region, the majority of whom from central

[9] Ibid, 136-148

[10] Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, Volume 1: Porfirians, Liberals, and Peasants, Reprint edition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 109-111

Mexico, to pick for a few weeks a year. This situation provoked labor conflict, strikes in the 1900s, and outright revolutionary violence in later years. [11]

Overall, the expansion of the Porfirian economy in the north led to the growth on industries that relied on wage labor, migrants from central Mexico, and links to US markets, but also destabilized many communities across the north. The construction of railroads and the boom in transportation of bulk goods over long distances had paradoxical results in northern and central Mexico. While some northern families, like the Terrazas of Chihuahua, or Maderos of Coahuila, grew increasingly powerful as access to markets gave new life to vertically integrated agricultural operations, their rise complimenting the new foreign operations, the arrival of markets had a detrimental effect on *rancheros*, villages, and sharecroppers who were not as well capitalized and in the ensuing years lost their autonomy through debt, and loss of land. Those who resisted, such as the Yaqui, faced violence. The Yaqui were the last pacified tribe on Mexico's northern frontier, while some accommodated the Mexican settlers, others resisted *hacendados* rule and after a series of violent episodes, many were enslaved in the Yucatan. In southern Mexico, plantations grew to enormous size and developed an increasingly un-free labor system. Freedom of movement was restricted, contractors, those serving jail sentences, indigenous people who had resisted the government, and debt peonage all served as basic labor in a system that Friedrich Katz has compared to slavery. [12] Meanwhile, in Central Mexico,

[11] John Tutino, *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico: Social Bases of Agrarian Violence, 1750-1940* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1987), 301-305; Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (Texas A&M University Press, 1993): 16-17

[12] Friedrich Katz, "Labor Conditions on Haciendas in Porfirian Mexico: Some Trends and Tendencies," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 54, no. 1 (1974): 1–47; 1. Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, Volume 1: Porfirians, Liberals, and Peasants, Reprint edition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 67.

population growth along with increasing numbers of people without land meant that more and more people sought work outside of their native regions and industries.[13]

While the transformation of northern Mexico most clearly illustrated the ways industrialization and agribusiness could transform society around capitalist development and foreign markets, it was in central Mexico and the Bajío where these changes led to the rise of mass migration. Long breadbasket and the most market oriented region of Mexico, the Bajío was also the most densely populated in the country, with a large population that had a long history of migrating out for work.[14] The Porfirian transformation of society unleashed a series of tensions that led to the Mexican Revolution, and made migration to the United States a solution for people form central Mexico. Which is where I turn in the first chapter.

[13] John Tutino, *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico: Social Bases of Agrarian Violence, 1750-1940* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1987), 302-303

[14] John Tutino, *Making a New World: Founding Capitalism in the Bajío and Spanish North America* (Durham NC: Duke University Press Books, 2011).

CHAPTER 1

Revolución y Migración

The Limits of Porfirian Development and the Rise of "Migration Fever" in San Luis Potosí and Guanajuato, 1890-1920

Since the 19th century migrants had come to the US from the northern Mexican states of Chihuahua, Nuevo León, Coahuila, Durango and Sonora. But the large scale migration that took off in the 1900s was primarily driven by the growth in the amount of migration from the central states of Michoacán, Jalisco, Aguascalientes, Guanajuato, and San Luis Potosí. The conditions that propelled this mass migration were created by the industrialization of the borderlands between Mexico and the US and the violence of the Mexican Revolution. However, large-scale structural forces do not explain variances in migration, how one town might send many migrants while another town nearby might remain unaffected. This chapter looks at the interplay of economic forces, revolutionary violence, and the personal choices people faced in two states, one a smaller state in the central/north, San Luis Potosí, and one in the heart of the migrant sending Bajío region, Guanajuato. I argue that while mass migration was initiated by labor recruiters and later encouraged by revolutionary violence, it only grew to such a large scale because of the burgeoning of interpersonal networks, which spread information and established durable pathways. Scholars of migration agree on the importance of these networks; in the Mexican case, however, there are no in-depth studies that illuminate how interpersonal networks established and reproduced in the early twentieth century.

A close examination of the regions sending migrants, especially the Bajío region and the less densely populated north-central region of Mexico, demonstrates that as people from

particular towns began to migrate into other parts of Mexico they encouraged friends, family members, and acquaintances to join them. As they returned from other places in Mexico and the US, they brought back money and information. These dynamics, along with the growth of middle class migration, helped to not only encourage further immigration, but lowered the difficulty of migration for new participants. A feedback loop was created that perpetuated and spread migration across the region. Even as economic tensions and land ownership patterns framed migration, the particular ways in which information spread catalyzed migration in central Mexico.

While historians have written about the economic structures and political tensions that framed mass migration, there has been surprisingly little study of the migrants themselves. Yet the voices of the migrants, expressing and revealing their experiences, may be found in letters to family members, in their songs, and in interviews with researchers, government officials, and others. Scholars have neglected a close reading of the stories told by migrants, or have used them as merely anecdotal evidence, perhaps because their interest has focused more on broader structural patterns or the politics surrounding Mexican migration. A focus on the migrants yields a different perspective, which shows migration not as something controlled by impersonal global and political forces but, rather, a dynamic that was continuously renegotiated and contested by events on the ground and the actions of people. Migrant personal networks operated within larger structural forces of revolutions, government policies, and labor markets, but they were also dynamic and constitutive elements of the larger structures of migration.

A review of the conditions that propelled migration within Mexico and then to the United States in this period makes clear the connection to Porfirian development. The areas of emigration experienced the greatest degree of change: here, railroads were built, landholdings

consolidated, mining operations expanded, and more and more people came to depend on waged labor. In many ways, these were the same developments that created the social tensions that erupted in the Mexican Revolution. As the case of San Luis Potosí exemplifies, the areas with the highest levels of unrest and social tensions during the Revolution were exactly the same areas that sent the most migrants north. However, the connection between social unrest and migratory intensity did not surface everywhere. Migration only became a major factor in places where social relations were conducive to its growth. Other revolutionary areas produced relatively few migrants. The State of Morelos for example, which was characterized by strong villages and hierarchical labor relations, sent few migrants. Instead, migrants came from the center and north of Mexico, where railroads, industrialization, and waged labor had transformed social relations. Moreover, the migrants were not the poorest of their communities; they tended to speak Spanish rather than indigenous languages; many were from small *ranchero* families or most likely, were *hacienda* laborers (though rarely peones acasillados); and others were skilled, even highly skilled workers. In other words, they had sufficient social and economic capital to make the journey. Most of all, they came from areas where the economy was being rapidly transformed around waged labor for export commodities, which created harsh local conditions of lowering standards of living while at the same time providing transportation and information that migrants needed to leave these conditions.[1]

Focusing on people, what they did, what they said, and the interactions between migrants and the society around them, shows the relationship between social transformation and

[1] The social and economic transformation of Porfirian Mexico is covered later in this paper, looking at conditions in San Luis Potosí and Guanajuato. For a longer discussion on the conditions that cause circular migration see the introduction and Jose C. Moya, *Cousins and Strangers: Spanish Immigrants in Buenos Aires, 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 1-59

migration. The industrialization of Mexico transformed social relations, bringing hardships for many. People reacted to these changes with Revolution and migration. An examination of the back and forth between Mexican migrants, *hacendados,* American expatriates and government officials, and their interactions with Mexican-American, American middlemen, businessmen, social workers and others reveals a different world of motivation than conventionally understood. Mexican migration was not the simple matter of push and pull economics, or the result of American capitalist exploitation or even labor agents selling dreams to unsuspecting laborers. It arose out of the complicated interplay of motivations and changing conditions in the lives of people as they came into contact with others. Specifically, mass emigration resulted from and complimented older patterns of circular migration that had been operating since the nineteenth century, emigrants returned from the United States and told others of what they had encountered there on the railroads, mines and farms. People took the risk of migrating by connecting with those they could trust, especially family members, as they traveled in groups and utilized distant connections. This web of interpersonal relationships and associations created migration chains that linked people across space and time, reducing the uncertainty and cost of traveling hundreds of miles for work.

Fully ten percent of the Mexican population migrated to the United States between 1910 and 1930. The migration that arose in these years was primarily circular in nature, driven by people who hoped to use money earned in the United States as a way to better their condition in Mexico. Migrants did not go uninformed to El Norte, but relied on information about jobs and opportunities. Migration that had been steady since the nineteenth century increased as railroad, mining and agriculture employers began to hire Mexicans in large numbers on both sides of the border. However, it was the turmoil of the Mexican Revolution that brought a larger and more

varied stream of migration. With the Revolution and American economic expansion after 1917, migration brought not only unskilled and low-skilled laborers, but also a large number of middle class people and skilled workers, as well as increasing numbers of women and extended relatives. The arrival of diverse migrant groups facilitated the creation of structures and organizations that helped support and further propel the migration networks in the United States. Information traveled through word of mouth, letters, recruiters, posters, and radio ads, enabling people to extend trust to others and facilitate travel across thousands of miles. The creation of these information and support networks was critical in the spread of "migration fever".[2]

By the early 1920s this flow turned into a flood as migration reached 100,000 people a year (both documented and undocumented). In central Mexico people quit their employers and *haciendas*, took loans from friends, family members and *patrones*, and traveled north. They traveled in groups, in families, and as individuals. They went with those they knew, with contractors, and with strangers. They rode on trains and automobiles, they stayed in boarding houses, bought food and provisions at the border and places beyond; they used contractors, traffickers and border inspectors to cross. They did not stop moving when they arrived in the US but continued to move between employers, states and regions, and back to Mexico. Most importantly, they returned to support families left behind and told other people about their journeys. Through all these actions, from the sharing of information, to the creation and consumption of services, to the informed use of various transportation and employment networks, they created durable patterns of a circular migration that spread across Mexico and the United States in these years.

[2] While the phrase comes from the Archbishop of Guadalajara, it was not an isolated case. Jose Moya illustrates the way "migration fever" was used by contemporaries across the world in the late 19th century and matches well with the way interpersonal networks grow from the found up. Moya, *Cousins and Strangers*. 95-120.

San Luis Potosí

The Porfiriato in San Luis Potosí is in many ways a microcosm of the economic changes that swept over central Mexico. As a state that lies in both Northern and Central Mexico, it slopes from the high plains in central/northern Mexico east towards the lowland jungles of the Huasteca. While much less dense than states in the western Bajío, the state became a center of economic and migratory movement. With large mining, railroad, and plantation based agricultural sectors, its story illustrates the relationship between economic change, violence, and migration.

In the 1880s both the Mexican Central and Mexican National Railroad ran lines into and out of the city of San Luis Potosí, the state capital, linking the interior of the country to the north and east. The Mexican National ran a branch line into the mining center of Matehuala which connected to the main line at Vanegas. However, the most significant rail project was the line running east to the port of Tampico, on the Gulf of Mexico. The construction of the Mexican Central turned out to be a lot more complicated than most investors thought. Taking twelve years to cover the distance between Tampico and San Luis, the railroad had to traverse several mountain passes before arriving the relatively flat valleys in the center of the state. As typical of many of these construction projects, in addition to the normal concessions of land next to the railroads the government of the state levied a special tax in 1878 to 1880 in order to finance the line. The railroad was completed in 1890 and in the years that followed, both San Luis Potosí and Tamaulipas experienced unequal economic growth. In the city of San Luis Potosí itself, economic growth lagged and it experienced labor troubles mostly around a series of railroad

strikes in 1908 centered on wages and the separation between Mexican and American workers. [3] It was in rural and mining communities in San Luis where massive changes occurred.

The construction of the railroad encouraged the consolidation of land on an unprecedented scale. *Hacendados* in the center and south of the state took over their surrounding villages. By 1910, an astounding 82% of the population in the state lived within *hacienda* boundaries.[4] In and around Tamazunchale in the state's southeastern Huasteca region, where new *hacendados* took land from indigenous villages though government concessions, a series of violent disputes arose that were still not resolved when the revolution started. Many of the valleys in the Huasteca became cattle operations and large areas were fenced in with barbed wire so that villages could not use the *hacienda* land for foraging as they had been their traditional right. As the number of independent land owners fell, *rancherías* became smaller and less numerous; and as *haciendas* grew, many towns lost common lands they previously claimed. Twenty-two people came to own a third of land of the entire state.[5]

The concentration of land into *haciendas*, the loss of autonomy, and the movement towards income based on wage labor had dramatic effects for the agriculture economy. Production was reoriented towards commercial crops for export and away from subsistence farming (see Table 1.1). While production rose in those industries it barely moved in maize, and in the rest of the country it even fell as profits from maize dropped comparatively. This resulted

[3] Dudley Ankerson, *Agrarian Warlord: Saturnino Cedillo and the Mexican Revolution in San Luis Potosí*, 1 edition (DeKalb, Ill: Northern Illinois University Press, 1985),

[4] Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, Volume 1: Porfirians, Liberals, and Peasants, Reprint edition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 343.

[5] Monroy María Isabel y Tomás Calvillo Unna, *Breve historia de San Luis Potosí*, 1. ed edition (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1997); Alan Knight, The Mexican Revolution, Volume 1: Porfirians, Liberals, and Peasants, Reprint edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 107-109

in the import of maize from the US.[6] Furthermore, the real wages of rural workers and conditions of tenants and sharecroppers deteriorated over time.[7]

Table 1.1: Average Annual production of selected crops in San Luis Potosí[8]

Crop	1893-1895	1905-1907
Cotton	18,000	38,500
Sugar	1,100,000	2,350,000
Coffee	20,000	30,000
Tobacco	9,350	12,000
Henequen	64,275	104,600

Silver and Gold mining made up the largest sector of the economy, but new metals soon came to rival them. From 1890 onwards, smelting of lead, copper, iron, zinc, and sulfur grew exponentially, with the Guggenheim ASARCO buying up the previously independent *Compañía Metalurgica Mexicana* and later the American National Metallurgical Company.

The presence of large US dominated mining and railroad firms in the state over the long term tended to spur migration to large urban centers. This was not in the interest of San Luis Potosí *hacendados* who resented the high cash wages that the mining companies gave their workers. In one case, local *hacendados* refused to sell land to US mining officials, who explained in a

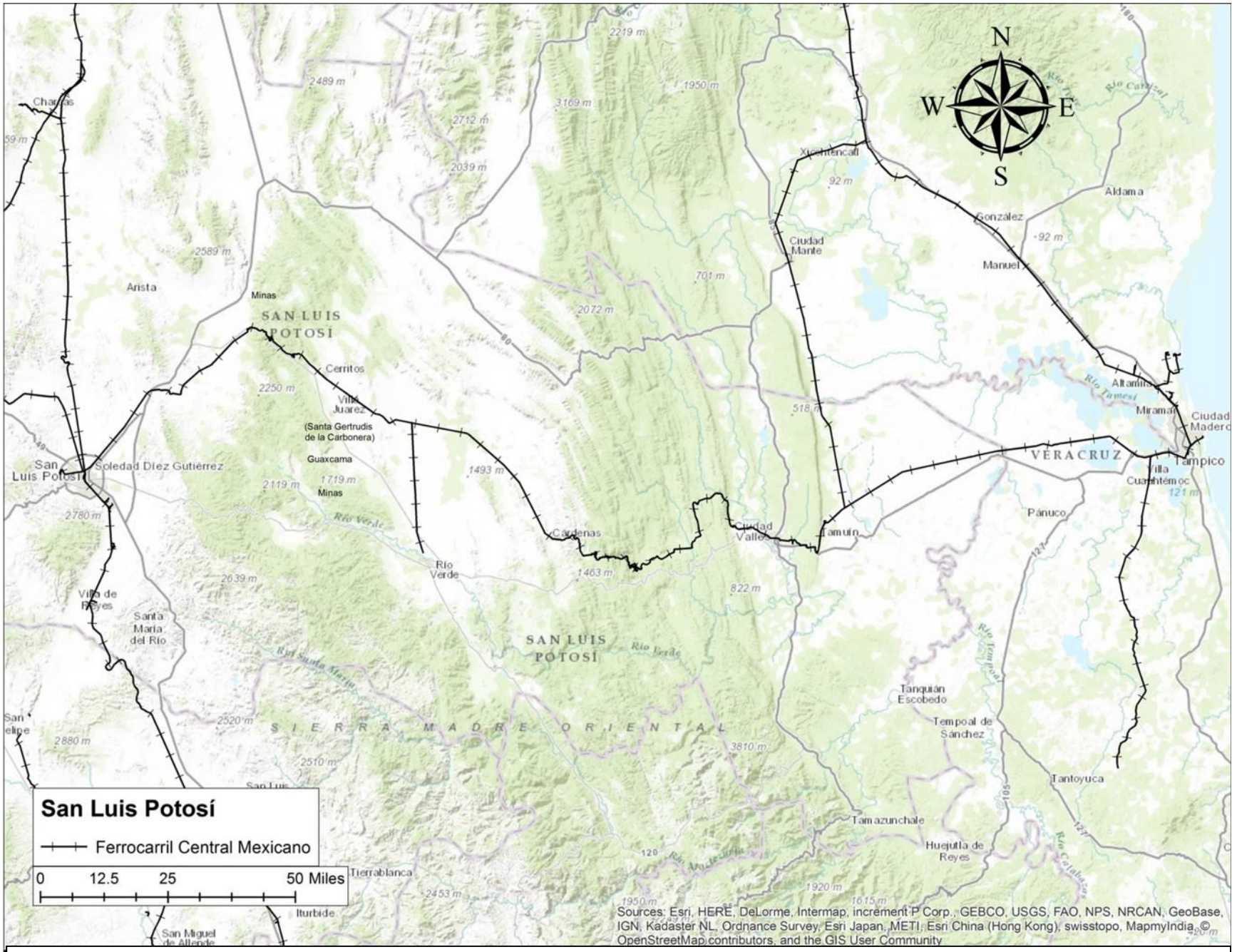
[6] John Tutino, *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico: Social Bases of Agrarian Violence, 1750-1940* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1987), 285-287

[7] Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, Volume 1: Porfirians, Liberals, and Peasants, Reprint edition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 79.

[8] Dudley Ankerson, *Agrarian Warlord: Saturnino Cedillo and the Mexican Revolution in San Luis Potosí*, 1 edition (DeKalb, Ill: Northern Illinois University Press, 1985), 10.

company report, “The proximity of an industrial center always does serious harm agricultural concerns, since the latter then never pay the wages offered by the former".[9]

[9] Ibid.



Map 1.1. Mexican Central from San Luis Potosí to Tampico, with the locations of Cerritos, Santa Gertrudis, Guaxcama, Rio Verde, Cardenas, Ciudad Valles, Tamuín, marked in between. *San Luis Potosí Railroad Map* [Map by author, created October 8th, 2015]

Between San Luis and Tampico

The valley that the railroad cut through on its way to Tampico follows roughly the same southeastern direction as the state lines. Despite high altitude, the relative flatness of the valley made construction somewhat easier than in other parts of Mexico. As the line moved out from San Luis Potosí, stations were established at Carcovoda, Silos, Villar, then in Cerritos, San Bartolo, las Tablas, and Cárdenas before moving into the mountains to Ciudad Valles, Tamuín, and into the Huasteca and to the sea. The region between the county seats of Cerritos and Cádenas would become a center of migrant activity. Between them lay the dual cities of Ciudad Fernández/Rio Verde, which was initially left unconnected to the Mexican Central. West of Cerritos lay the small town of Santa Gertrudis de la Carbonera. None of these places were dynamic economically or had much migration before the arrival of the Mexican Central, which makes them good candidates for an examination of the ways railroads and industrialization changed small towns across central Mexico.

The Zona Media of the state of San Luis Potosí is semi-arid with a relatively short rainy season of about three months in duration.[10] The area's farming economy is fed by a few small rivers and many streams that run down from the mountains that line the valley. This meant however, that irrigation was needed for the most demanding agricultural production, something that benefited the largest and most capitalized *hacendados* of the region, such as the Hacienda de San Anton Guxcama, the Laguna de Santo Domingo, and Angostura, some of the largest *haciendas* in the state. These operations tended to dominate the politics of the region.

[10] Though many longtime residents claim that the region was much wetter before the 1960's, I have not been able to find collaborating evidence for this.

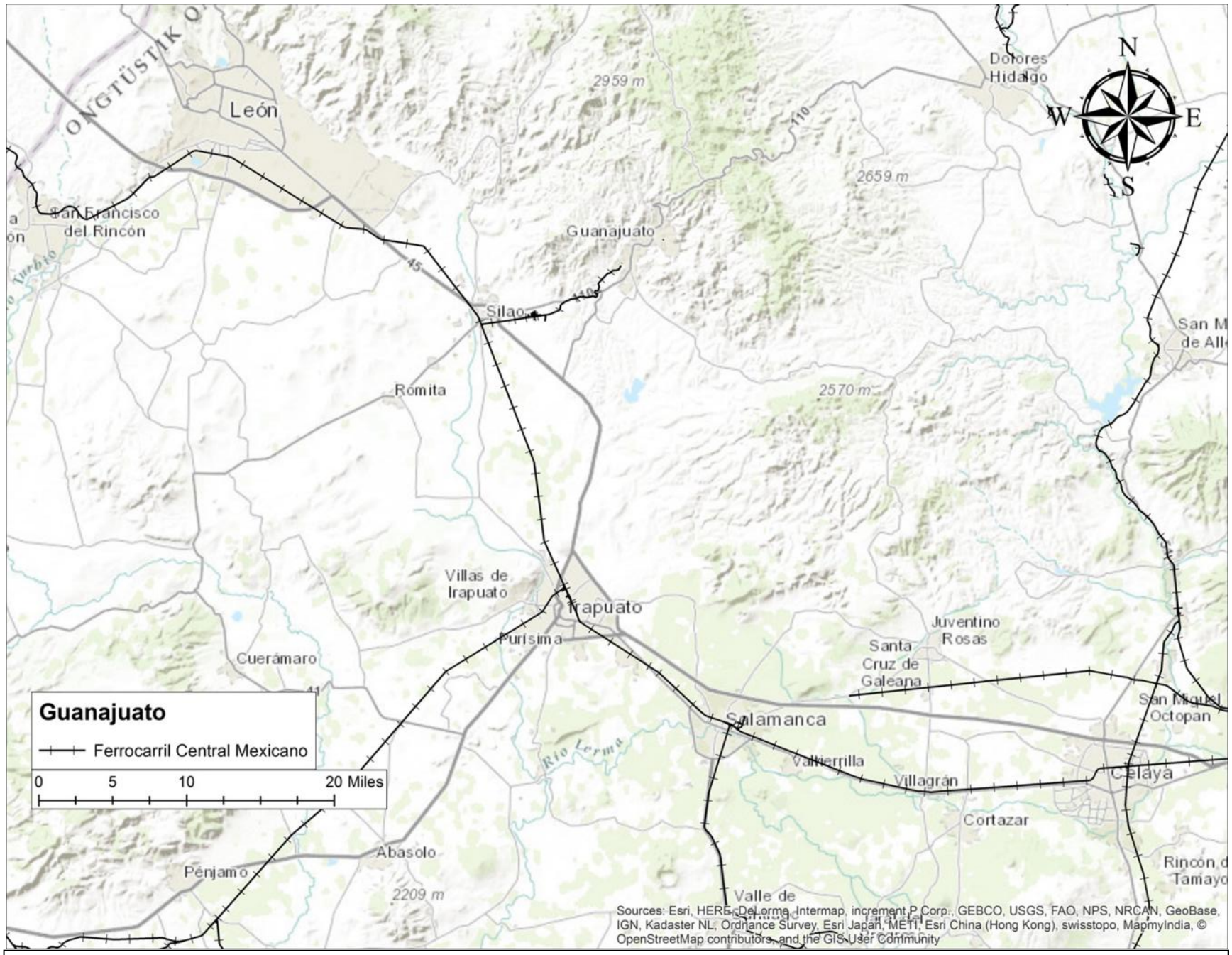
The relationship between the *hacendados* in the area and the people that worked for them was often hostile before the Revolution. Angostura was owned by Antonio Espinosa y Cervantes, one of the richest men of the state. The *hacienda* surrounded Santa Gertrudis de la Carbonera (also known as Villa de Carbonera), on two sides on the south. The residents of the town held a grant from colonial decrees to about 1,700 hectares. In 1879, Espinosa y Cervantes claimed about 350 of those hectares as part of Angostura. When the residents of the town brought in a judge and government surveyors who upheld their claim, Espinosa y Cervantes used his connections to have state troops resurvey the land in his favor. The village, like many in the state was completely enclosed by *haciendas* by 1910.

To the southwest, the Hacienda de San Anton Guxcama had existed in one form or another since the seventeenth century. The *hacienda* boasted more than a hundred families, its own aqueduct system, a convent, and vast ranch lands. Indeed, the tiny church town of San Gertrudis de la Carbonera seemed more like a satellite of the *hacienda* than the main market town of the area. This imbalance in power between the people of the valley and the state elites had only grown since the establishment of sulfur mines in the mountains above Guxcama in the late colonial period. In 1808 a German company began sulfur extraction, the concession would later be bought by Mariano Niño. However, even these were small in the 1880s when the railroad started to cut through the northeast side of the municipality. Once the rail line was completed the mines grew to an enormous scale.

In 1890 the Mexican Central completed the branch line linking San Luis Potosí and Tampico, connecting the center of the country to major Atlantic port. In the years following, most of the freight of the railroad went through the valley, with passenger and fueling stops at Cerritos and Cárdenas. Another branch line was added to connect Rio Verde with the main trunk

line further north. Although most of the agricultural production of the area continued to be sold in local markets, with some crops going to San Luis Potosí via Cerritos, major changes occurred at the mines in the area. Two new mines were established in the area, above Cerritos and Guxcama. Nevertheless, the mines at Guaxcama truly stand out, there, two mining towns grew up almost overnight, Buenavista and a company town on the site of the mines themselves. The workforce at Guaxcama swelled in the next twenty years so that by the start of the revolution over 700 workers labored in the sulfur mines. Additionally, these workers supported several hundred other jobs in the immediate vicinity, especially at Buenavista, where all workers had to pass to get from the mines to the main roads. Although relying on different economic industries than the counterparts in the state of Guanajuato to which they will be compared, in both areas similar processes would later lead to social violence and migration.[11]

[11] Local histories in "Asi es San Luis.. Y asi es Villa Juarez", unpublished, 1996; Ankerson, Agrarian Warlord, 50-53.



Map 1.2. The Mexican Central in Guaajuato, from San Francisco de Rincón to Celaya. With Leon, Silao, Guanajuato, Romita, Irapuato, Salamanca, Penjamo and other towns shown. *Guanajuato Railroad Map*, [Map by Author, created] October 8th, 2015]

Guanajuato: Celaya and San Francisco de Rincón

Like San Luis Potosí, Guanajuato encompasses two very different regions, a mountainous north that is rich in mineral ores and a low south in the Bajío valley. Historically one of the most productive regions in Mexico, Guanajuato's economic growth was even greater than that of San Luis Potosí. In the northern part of the state the growth was particularly pronounced in silver and gold, where during the last two decades of the nineteenth century a boom was experienced that had not been seen in a century. The primary impetus for this boom was the US Sherman Silver Act of 1890, which pushed up the price of lead and silver as the US shifted to a dual-metal financial system. As a result, large mining companies in the US quickly moved to buy up old mines in Mexico, bringing in large amounts of outside capital to production. This recapitalization came with new technology and science which enabled massive economies of scale. Many mines shipped to a single smelter which in some cases took in ores from several mines on both sides of the border.[12]

However, it was the southern part of the state with its massive agricultural region that had greater consequences for the history of migration. Located northwest of the central plateau of Mexico, the Bajío basin stretches across five states and constitutes the most productive agricultural region in Mexico. In the Guanajuato Bajío, the consolidation of lands into major *haciendas* was achieved at a similar scale to that of San Luis Potosí. They were smaller, but that was mostly because they held less arid and semi-arid lands and a larger percentage of highly

[12] In one mine, the Cubo mine, went from no production and having been believed exhausted, to making 150 tons of ore per day, employing 672 people and a 50% profit rate in 1910, while paying among the highest wages in the country. However, these silver operations were often dangerous and used a high level of cyanide in the refining process, and mortality rates were high. Even so, thousands of people flocked to them either work in the mines themselves or in many of the ancillary industries that existed in mining towns. Many of these miners eventually went north to work in mines in Arizona. John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War*, New Ed edition (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2006). Ch 5, 145

fertile lands. In the years before the Revolution, haciendas had consolidated land from autonomous villages and had become more powerful than the many *rancheros* in the state. The result was strong profit margins even in years where production of maize decreased.[13]

The two cities of Celaya and San Francisco de Rincón situated at different ends of the state of Guanajuato, share several traits that made them more similar than they appear at first sight. Both would become places where eventually hundreds would leave to work in the United States, almost all men who worked in agriculture. Celaya's economy was agricultural like that of many cities in the area. Located near the eastern end of the Bajío basin, it was surrounded by some of the richest agricultural ground in all of Mexico. A center of trade and agricultural production since the colonial period, it also became a manufacturing center in the 1880s but was dominated by its many artisan craftsmen. The tracks of the Mexican Central Railroad converged with those of the Mexican National at Celaya, making it an important juncture for the movement of goods. In addition to a rail yard, the city had telegraph operations, warehouses, oil processing, food processing factories as well as distilleries, and an electrical generation plant.

San Francisco de Rincón on the other hand did not have a major mining or manufacturing economy. It lies on a valley on the other side of the mountains from León, next to hills and the Santiago River, from which it is irrigated, compensating somewhat for its short rainy season. It was home to a large agricultural economy and several major *haciendas*. It also became home to a branch line of the Mexican Central that connected to the main line at León. It is this link that proved important. As León became a major city and industrial center it began to pull migrants in from the surrounding countryside. These workers began to work for the Mexican Central

[13] Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, Volume 1: Porfirians, Liberals, and Peasants, Reprint edition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 92-93.

Railroad, and when they did they began to travel further and further north eventually coming back to town with stories to tell.

The towns of San Francisco de Rincón and Celaya both became centers of migration activity as citizens moved out from the towns to other parts of Mexico and to the United States. While the people who left in San Luis Potosí were often tied to mining operations, those from these two towns came primarily from agricultural backgrounds. Manuel Perez, an agricultural laborer from San Francisco de Rincón says that people were already telling stories about migration before the Revolution, when he was a child. "I became acquainted with a number of boys in my hometown who enthused me with the idea of coming to work in the United States," he recounted. He went on to state that, in 1910, "since I didn't have the means with which to come I told those friends that I would meet them here. One of them, however, lent me enough for the date to Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, telling me that we would take an "*enganche*" in El Paso… I came [to the US] leaving my wife and my child who was then about five."[14] Later, when he arrived in California, he ran into other people from his area of Guanajuato who gave him advice on taking railroad work. He was just one dozens who left his town in the 1910s, yet his account contains many of the same themes that occurred again and again in migrant stories. The spread of information via friendships and families first spurred his interest and action, he borrowed money from hometown social networks which made financing the trip possible and used information that people from his town or region told him in order to make the journey easier. He left his young family behind intending to send money back. These patterns appear again and

[14] Vidas de Manuel Perez, 1927, No 1, interview, BANC FILM 2332 REEL 2, GNEG Box 2569, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

again in migrant accounts. It was, however, the Revolution that truly turned migration into a widespread phenomenon across all social and economic groups in Guanajuato.

Haciendas and El Norte

As society became increasingly transformed by large-scale mining and export-oriented agriculture, a larger and larger number of people in central and northern Mexico became wage laborers. This transformation, with the loss of subsistence farming, created massive uncertainty. When market prices dropped, greater numbers of people were reduced to poverty than ever before. Yet this new relationship between labor, land, and capital also threatened traditional hierarchies. *Hacendados* suddenly found themselves competing with railroads, mines, and industrial companies, not to mention other *hacendados*, for workers. Worse, many found themselves competing against jobs in El Norte after news of even higher wages across the border started to circulate. Some *hacendados*, especially in the north, embraced these changes, recruiting workers from central Mexico and rivalling Laguna operations by offering higher wages and by providing schools, health care and other services to recruit new workers and keep them from going to Texas. Others, in central Mexico in particular, fought against these changes to keep their workers on the land.[15]

In the countryside, *hacendados* came to see a multitude of threats to their control of local labor, from mining companies and railroads, to going north, to violent revolution. In Mexico, Article 11 of the 1857 Constitution had established the right of entering and leaving the country, but this right had increasingly been limited on the ground by various forms of local passes and

[15] Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, Volume 1: Porfirians, Liberals, and Peasants, Reprint edition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 90.

attempts to keep workers on the land, and *hacendados* increasingly turned to more forceful methods.[16] In San Luis Potosí, the number of people living in small settlements dropped as people left the rural countryside. Taking note of this in 1906, Jose Encarnacion Impina wrote to Luis Toranzo, the owner of the *Cerro Prieto hacienda* southeast of Rioverde, "I am thinking of selling all my *haciendas*, not because they are not profitable or cause me any loses, but I already hear the approaching steps of the commune… you cannot imagine how the countryside is here in San Luis… it is like a desert and the people are departing in droves for the north".[17] While no large scale violence had broken out, small incidents of repression caused fear among *hacendados* and spurred migration by workers.

As *hacendados* became more economically and politically powerful, tension from workers increased and so did the volume of internal and external migration out of their control. Migration tended to come from areas that were undergoing capitalist transformation rather than areas that were economically stagnant or had no rail connection. In 1885 railroads reached Jalisco and Michoacán on their way to Guadalajara from Mexico City. Lawrence Cardoso found evidence of outmigration from these states as early as the 1890s as railroad workers moved to higher wages in the north.[18] Laurencio Sanguino found similar results in the migrant sending areas of Zamora Michoacán. In 1899 the district has 35 *haciendas* and 130 *rancherías*, but by 1910 the land was in the hands of 40 *hacendados*, and 1905 unemployment reached 45%. As a result, half of all internal migrants in Mexico came from the central states. Wages averaged

[16] David Fitzgerald, "Inside the Sending State: The Politics of Mexican Emigration Control," International Migration Review 40 Number 2 (Summer 2006):259–293.

[17]Dudley Ankerson, *Agrarian Warlord: Saturnino Cedillo and the Mexican Revolution in San Luis Potosí*, 1 edition (DeKalb, Ill: Northern Illinois University Press, 1985), Pg 22

[18] Lawrence A Cardoso, Mexican *Emigration to the United States 1897*-1931 (The University of Arizona Press, 1980)

around $.40 *centavos* a day, compared to up to $.75 in southern Mexico, $1-1.5 pesos a day in northern Mexico and $2-$4 pesos a day in the United States. In other words, "the wages available in Arizona, California and Texas were 400-900 percent higher than those available in Guanajuato, Jalisco and Michoacán."[19] It is not a surprise that Zamora had a difficult time keeping people, but the disparity of wages alone was not enough to spur migration; a certain confluence of violence had to take place as well.

During these years, there were many Americans writing popular and government reports about Mexico, from private businessmen to journalists and official government visitors. In 1910 Frank Stone, a Bureau of Immigration official, traveled through Mexico to assess the sources of migration to the United States. He traveled to the states of Chihuahua, Aguascalientes, Guanajuato, Jalisco and Michoacán in order to examine these migrant sending areas. He found that the workers who were migrating were mostly from the *haciendas*, especially those that grew staple crops. In these states local government had started to take a variety of approaches to migration. Some states with long histories of out-migration to other parts of Mexico passed laws prohibiting the contracting of laborers outside of their state. Others took more drastic action. Amado Delgado, a *Jefe Político* in Guanajuato, went so far as to forcibly remove *peones* from the trains and put recruiters in jail; but even this did not prevent the exodus of workers, many of whom bought tickets to another part of Mexico before buying tickets to the United States. In the Laguna district of Durango, *hacendados* routinely complained that migration to the United States caused losses during the cotton chopping and picking seasons. Wages in the five years before 1910 rose from 25 cents a day to 62 ½ cents a day. The *hacendados* he spoke with "attribute[ed]

[19] Laurencio Sanguino, "The Origins of Migration between Mexico and the United States, 1905-1945" (PhD Diss., University of Chicago, 2012): Ch. 2.

the necessity for increasing the wages to the migration of the *peones* to the United States; as the men returning from the United States every year, instilling dissatisfaction among the *peones* remaining on the *haciendas*, and those who have once been in the United States soon become unmanageable and of little use." As a result of these problems, Stone wrote, "*Hacendados* themselves [were] doing everything in their power to discourage the migration of *peones*".[20] In another part of the country, the US consul was told by angry landowners, that "an hacendado from Vera Cruz was asked by his laborers for a night school. He was pleased with their interest and provided a teacher. After about three months about twenty-five of thirty of his best laborers left for the United States. They had wanted to be able to pass the literacy test."[21]

In Zamora, Michoacán, the *Jefe Político* claimed that two thousand people left per year. The *Jefe* often jailed and arrested migrants coming through the town as they were leaving or coming back. Stone found that wages in the mining areas of Coahuila and Zacatecas were also rising in order to keep workers from leaving for mines in Arizona. He described a process whereby migrant miners signed up for railroad jobs that would take them to Arizona or New Mexico, where they then "endeavor to locate near a mine and generally take work at the nearest mine, [with] there being a demand almost always for them." These migrants often borrowed money from friends and family but also local merchants to finance their trip. Fare from Irapuato to El Paso ran twenty-seven pesos and people would go to various sources in order to raise the amount. When a migrant returned from the United States he might "[give] a glowing account of the conditions obtained here; the result of which is that when he leaves for the United States he is

[20] Confidential Report by Frank R Stone to Supervising Inspector, June 23 1910, Bureau of Immigration, 52546/31 B, INS Records 85, NARA, Washington D.C

[21] Paul H Foster, US Consul, Piedras Negras, Coahuila, Nov 28, 1928, Folder 10:4, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

accompanied by one of more of his neighbors, each member of the family contributing a small share to sending one of its younger members." Overall, as people left in large numbers, agricultural wages in some migrant areas rose to compete with wages on Mexican railroads, which were in turn being forced up by the prospect of railroad work in the United States.[22] US government officials, *jefes políticos*, *hacendados* and Mexican government officials lacked reliable information about this new flow and disagreed about its causes and how to bring it under control. They did, however, all agree on the undesirability of migration.

Before the revolution, most migrant accounts focused on wages as the primary motivation for going north and almost always worked on railroads. DeGregorio Vázquez, an illiterate man from Ojos de Agua, Guanajuato, was a waiter until 1907 when his friends told him about the US and even lent him money for the journey. He contracted himself out ("*engancho,*" as was commonly used, or "to hook oneself on to"), and worked on railroads in Arizona before becoming a foreman and moving to California with his wife. By 1927 he had become a landholder and sent for his sisters. But even then he still hoped to return to Mexico.[23] Another man from Guanajuato told Paul Taylor in 1929 that the first men from his *hacienda* started to go to the US eighteen years prior, to Kansas and St. Louis on the railroad; he followed their path with other friends until he reached Chicago.[24]

Migrants from Central Mexico were coming from areas where capitalist development was changing land owning patterns, where people were experiencing a new world of waged

[22] Confidential Report by Frank R Stone to Supervising Inspector, June 23 1910, Bureau of Immigration, 52546/31 B, INS Records 85, NARA, Washington D.C

[23] Vidas la de, DeGregorio Vazques, interview, BANC FILM 2332 REEL 2, GNEG Box 2569, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[24] Unfortunately, Taylor did not record his name, within interview with Alvaro Ruis, Interview on April 20, 1929, Folder 10:4, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

labor and more powerful *hacendados*. Workers increasingly turned to migration to northern Mexico as a solution and eventually followed this economic logic to its ultimate conclusion: El Norte. Stone correctly assessed that "it does not appear that it is necessary for such tactics [labor agents] to be resorted to as the present time, as the Mexican aliens who have come to the United States, secured employment, and after a period returned to their home in Mexico, have so diffused the information that wages and living conditions are so far superior in the United States to Mexico that the influx has by these natural means increased from year to year."[25] This economic logic unnerved many of the *hacendados* who had done so much to bring it about. They had ended the local autonomy of villages and older hierarchies to create an agricultural proletariat only to see many of them use the same tools to their own advantage and leave. Even worse, for the vast majority who stayed put in their local region, their patience was at and end. The Mexican Revolution eventually altered pattern of migration on both sides of the border, bringing much larger and varied waves of people north.

The Mexican Revolution and the Beginning of Mass Migration

Starting as a liberal political challenge to President Porforio Díaz's reelection by Francisco Madero, the Mexican Revolution became a social revolution with multiple warring factions for the better part of the 1910s. The Revolution was in many ways a direct reaction to the Porfirian-led transformation of the economy. The loss of land by indigenous and rural communities along with the concentration of wealth by powerful landowning families and foreign dominated companies led to deepening social tensions. The economy became

[25] Introduction to Confidential Report by Frank R Stone to Supervising Inspector, June 23 1910, Bureau of Immigration, 52546/31 B, INS Records 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

increasingly imbalanced as industrialization led to an export/resource dependent economy in which foreign companies captured most of the gains from productivity increases.[26] By 1910 the US, Britain, and Germany controlled most of the mining, railroad, and industrial capacity of the. country.[27] American owners controlled 130,000,000 acres, the bulk of that was held by only 160 individuals or corporations.[28] More importantly, economic growth stalled, a result of economic structural limits. Agriculture was particularly effected, with rural wages falling 17% and industrial wages by half in the decade before the revolution.[29] In the political sphere, a series of incidents undermined Porfirian legitimacy, including uprisings by Yaqui Indians, revolts in the northern borderlands and urban strikes.[30]

However, it was not until the political crisis caused by the 1910 election that large scale revolt broke out. Madero's Plan de San Luis Potosí inspired many people beyond his urban liberal base, including villagers, indigenous communities, *hacienda* workers, and *serrano* people of the Mexican frontiers, all of whom had recently lost their traditional autonomy to the new economy. Rural rebellion broke out across the country from Morelos to Sonora and continued

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[26] John H. Coastworth, *Growth Against Development: The Economic Impact of Railroads in Porfirian Mexico* (Northern Illinois University Press, 1981); Charles A. Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Princeton University Press, 1989); Jose Angel Hernandez, *Mexican American Colonization during the 19th Century: A History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Cambridge University Press 2012)

[27] Jonathan C. Brown, Oil *and Revolution in Mexico* (University of California Press, 1993); Mario Cerutti, *El Norte de Mexico y Texas: 1848-1880* (Instituto Mora, 1999); John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War* (University of California Press, 2002); Marcial E. Ocasio Melendez *Capitalism and Development: Tampico, México 1876-1924* (Peter Land Publishing, 1998)

[28] US companies did not help ease tensions, they created separate colonies for white Americans, creating separate legal and social structures, reserving the highest paid jobs for Americans and often hiring Asian and European immigrants rather than native Mexicans. The discrepancy in wages between US workers and Mexicans was 20 to 1 in mines and 30 to 1 on plantations. John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War*, New Ed edition (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2006). Pg 261

[29] Ibid 265; Katherine Benton-Cohen, *Borderline Americans: Racial Division and Labor War in the Arizona Borderlands* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011). 1. Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2001).

[30] Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998). 1-56.

after Madero became President, with the bloodiest fighting between 1913-1915 as various factions fought battles across the country. Even after the secular liberal Constitutionalists won control of Mexico City, violence continued into the 1920s.[31]

The ways the revolution played out in the north had long lasting effects on migratory patterns from Central Mexico. Throughout Mexico spontaneous eruptions of violence took place with some flying the banner of one revolutionary group or another, while other areas remained quiet. From the early 1910s until at least the mid-1920s, the far north remained a place from which various factions launched revolts, from Madero to *Villistas* to Pascual Orozco and Victoriano Huerta, among others. However, it was the Magón brothers and Villa had wide appeal among migrants in the border region.

The brothers, Enrique Flores and Ricardo Flores Magón founded the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) in 1905 in San Luis Potosí as a political movement to re-found the Liberal Party of the mid- nineteenth century. The Díaz government shut down its newspaper in 1904 and threw PLM leaders in jail; others fled in exile to the US.h The PLM relocated its newspaper *Regeneración* to Los Angeles and the movement quickly gained support among Mexicans who read it on both sides of the border. In the first two months after Madero's call for revolution, the PLM organized its own revolt, taking over parts of northern Baja California and establishing short-lived anarchist communes. As the main front of the Revolution shifted to Madero and

[31] For longer discussion the Revolution and its aftermath see Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, Volume 1 & 2* Cambridge Cambridgeshire ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998); Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States and the Mexican Revolution*, trans. Loren Goldner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); John Tutino, *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico: Social Bases of Agrarian Violence, 1750-1940* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1987); Frans J. Schryer, *The Rancheros of Pisaflores: The History of a Peasant Bourgeoisie in Twentieth-Century Mexico, First Edition edition* (Toronto ; Buffalo: Univ of Toronto Pr, 1979); John Womack, *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1970); Michael J. Gonzales and Lyman L. Johnson, *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940, 1st edition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002).

events in Cuidad Juárez, however, the Mexican government successfully retook Tijuana and authorities in the United States prosecuted the Magón brothers under the Neutrality Act.[32] Thus ended their effective participation as revolutionaries. The Magóns came to be seen as ideological forbearers of the Revolution, with many of their ideas becoming incorporated into the revolutionary agenda. However much less attention has been paid to the role of migrants in the north during this short lived movement.[33]

The Laguna region seethed with discontent right before the Revolution. A few years previously many migrant cotton workers returning from the US had come back seeped in PLM ideas. As one planter noted, "in the last five years everything has changed with regard to workers in Laguna. Before then, the *peon* was content with his reed hut and with 32 centavos por día. Today he demands a house of adobe and a salary of two or three times more." In 1906 they came with "anarchist and socialist ideas," and even led "an armed revolt against the military post at Viesca."[34] Once the revolution got underway in 1910 the Laguna experienced attacks by villages and farmers that had lost lands to the *haciendas.* They were often joined by *hacienda* workers, and raids from Orozco and *Villistas* from the *serrano*. By 1912 the Laguna plantation economy was shattered.[35] Before the revolution many cotton workers migrated seasonally to the Texas cotton fields, but now the numbers were much greater, and included families and those in the middle class. Many of the migrant workers in the Laguna, who had originally come from central Mexico, migrated again into the US for work.

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[32] The Neutrality Act made it illegal for anyone inside of the United States to plot violence, rebellion or to overthrow a foreign government.

[33] Claudio Lomnitz, *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón* (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2014).

[34] Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (Texas A&M University Press, 1993): 65

[35] Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, Volume 1: Porfirians, Liberals, and Peasants*, Reprint edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 447.

The PLM and later the Villista movement were particularly popular among railroad men, and those who had experience working in the borderlands. Mayor Adan Uro Garcia and his family fit this mold, having come up from Parral Chihuahua to El Paso Texas in the years before the revolution to work on the railroad. His father and brother were supporters of the PLM before the revolution, and during the Revolution fought for the Villistas.[36] Migrants returning from the United States proved to be among the most enthusiastic supporters of the Revolution in the north, Fredrich Katz, in his study of Francisco Villa and his movement found that a disproportionate number of his followers were railroad men and those who had experience in the United States. [37]

Because of the large scale of internal migration into and out of the north and the United States, ideas and information spread quickly and often aggressively. This was not only among those who had lost land or livelihood but also among those who had benefited from the region's transformation. The arrival of railroads not only lowered the cost and increased the speed of transportation, it also allowed the dissemination of information and people across much larger spaces. An advocate of migrants who supported their repatriation to Mexico, the anthropologist Manuel Gamio went to the US and interviewed hundreds of Mexicans living there. Based on the numbers of people returning, where they had gone in the United States and where they were going in Mexico, interviews and remittance figures, Gamio argued that returning migrants had helped spread revolutionary ideas in northern Mexico and discontent stemming from their comparison to the United States and increasing contact with industrial life.[38] This contrasted to

[36] Entrevista con El Mayor Adan Uro Garcia Realizada por Laura Espejel, February 2 1973, Archivo de la Palabra: Revolutio Mexicana, Biblioteca Central, INAH, Mexico D.F.

[37] Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford University Press, 1998)

[38] Manuel Gamio, Preliminary Report, "Antecedents on the Mexican Immigration in the United States", BANC FILM 2332 REEL 3, GNEG Box 2570, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

the majority of government officials who saw migrants as having abandoned the nation during the revolution, and not deserving of the Revolution's rewards years later.

An examination of the lives of migrants in this period shows the multifaceted ways that the Revolution reshaped migration to the United States and within Mexico. From 1911-1917 about half a million people officially emigrated from Mexico to the United States, with those who did not go through the official process estimated at about 50% more.[39] Although revolutionary violence at first slowed migration and shut down much of the border in 1910 and 1913, the length and extent of the Revolution meant that after 1911 migrants came from more diverse places and backgrounds. This led to the establishment of much more varied migrant communities across the United States, with more families and people of different social positions, from political exiles to journalists, which helped created many of the Mexican-American communities and networks that in turn led to self-sustaining migration in the 1920s.

Revolution and Migration in San Luis Potosí & Guanajuato

It did not take long for the Revolution to reach San Luis Potosí. Within days of Madero's uprising many villages in the Huasteca revolted, including Tamazunchale, usually against local *hacendados* and government officials, sometimes with taking over local disputed lands as their main goals. Despite government efforts to quell the unrest, over the course of a few months much of the rest of the south and center of the state had joined the revolt. While in the south it was primarily indigenous villagers who had lost their lands to *haciendas* that revolted, in the Zona Media it was Hispanicized *hacienda* workers and their enclosed villages that joined the

[39] Numbers based on the Bureau of Immigration and Manuel Gamio's estimate in 1929. Manuel Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States* (University of Chicago Press, 1930)

revolt, though rarely taking the lead. In the Zona Media city of Ciudad de Maiz, the Cedillo brothers began to unite various groups of *rancheros* and *hacienda* workers under their banner.[40]

The railroad from San Luis to Tampico became a frequent target of various factions, with towns passing from control by one side to another with relative regularity. At one point the government of the state resorted to train inspections of men going to work in the United States, and conscripted into the army or imprisoned those without written contracts.[41] Wilbert L. Bonney, local US Consul in San Luis Potosí during the revolution wrote a series of reports back to the state department on revolutionary activity, and also described many of the conditions on the ground that fueled the tensions. On September 22, 1912, he reported on the general working conditions, arguing that the revolution was economic rather than political in nature, and that violence was aimed at local oppressors. Like other observers he saw the connection to emigration. He wrote that laborers, having few options, "have resorted to other means to accomplish their objective. These means are as follows: 1) Labor Strikes 2) Emigration to the United States 3) Enlistment in the army 4) joining the lawless bands of marauders," the latter referring to rebel groups of rancheros that organized throughout the state.[42]

Cerritos in particular became a strategic point for anyone trying to control the railroad and roads, as many east-west roads to San Luis Potosí passed through the town. During the worst of the fighting, the town was almost abandoned, as several thousand men leaving the area. The same was true in the rest of the valley. The owner of the great Angostura hacienda was shot by

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[40] Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, Volume 1: Porfirians, Liberals, and Peasants*, Reprint edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 191-193.

[41] Dudley Ankerson, *Agrarian Warlord: Saturnino Cedillo and the Mexican Revolution in San Luis Potosí*, 1 edition (DeKalb, Ill: Northern Illinois University Press, 1985), pg 39

[42] Ibid 53

the Cedillos. In the largest city of the Zona Media, Rio Verde rebels under the '*Vaquista*' banner laid siege to the city, and later it was captured by Daniel Becerra in 1912. Over the next six years the city was frequently attacked by various factions. When *hacendados* tried to use violence to enforce the old paternalistic order, they often found their victories to by Pyrrhic in nature, with workers demanding wages, losses of efficiency, or worse; people leaving to join the rebels or to head north. *Hacienda* workers proved particularly supportive of rebels in the state, joining them and overturning the old order. [43]

The mines in the region were not spared. While miners were not very revolutionary in general, in San Luis Potosí there is ample evidence of militant miners joining the revolution to press their claims.[44] Likewise, mines were susceptible to work stoppages that sent workers packing to other locations. In March of 1912 the mines of Guaxcama closed, suddenly throwing 700 men out of work, some joining the revolt, the majority migrating away. At the Hacienda de San Anton Guxcama, things turned much more hostile. The *hacienda* was destroyed, with the laborers at the *hacienda* forcing the owning family to divide the land and turn it over to the people living on the land.[45] This event also launched a two decade long legal dispute over ownership of the *hacienda* that included several acts of violence and did not end until the Cardenas Administration ruled for the families living on the land in 1938. [46] Out of work and being next to the Mexican Central Railroad, it was not long before these men began migrating to

[43] Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, Volume 1: Porfirians, Liberals, and Peasants*, Reprint edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 271., 343-44.

[44] Dudley Ankerson, *Agrarian Warlord: Saturnino Cedillo and the Mexican Revolution in San Luis Potosí*, 1 edition (DeKalb, Ill: Northern Illinois University Press, 1985), 44-66

[45] Local histories in "Asi es San Luis.. Y asi es Villa Juarez", unpublished, 1996; Dotacion, Poblacion Guxcama, Villa Juárez, San Luis Potosí, Mexico, 23/21221, Archivo del Registro Agrario, México DF.

[46] Dotacion, Poblacion Guxcama, Villa Juárez, San Luis Potosí, Mexico, 23/21221, Archivo del Registro Agrario, México DF.

jobs in northern Mexico, and some began to go to the United States. Cerritos in particular was an origin point of railroad and mining workers in Texas in the late 1910s and early 1920s (discussed in later chapters). In San Luis Potosí the revolution was primarily a regional affair with a guerrilla war waged between different bands, a weak state, and *hacendados* from the Huasteca to the Media Zona, until the Cedillos took control of much of the state.

In Guanajuato, despite the large numbers of *haciendas*, the more stable social relations of the Bajío with villages and especially *rancheros* meant that there were fewer people willing to take the risk of open rebellion. Although there were economic inequalities and social tensions in the Bajío, its large population of free holding *rancheros* and longstanding *haciendas* mitigated against violence.[47] This is not to say there was no violence in San Francisco de Rincón and Celaya. In both cities middle-class residents attempted short lived revolts, and on a larger scale, large numbers of people rioted against the *Porfiriato* and food shortages. Despite this, the countryside did not join the cause.[48] However, once war broke into the state from the outside, many did become involved. The state was a strategic target for all sides in the conflict because of its railroad hubs and the various factions staged numerous raids against government forces in 1912 and 1913. In the spring of 1915 full-scale war came to the state as Constitutionalists and

[47] John Tutino, *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico: Social Bases of Agrarian Violence, 1750-1940* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1987) 276-349; Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, Volume 1: Porfirians, Liberals, and Peasants, Reprint edition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 100-101; for a counter example of how rancheros could influence revolutionary events, see 1. Frans J. Schryer, *The Rancheros of Pisaflores: The History of a Peasant Bourgeoisie in Twentieth-Century Mexico, First Edition edition* (Toronto ; Buffalo: Univ of Toronto Pr, 1979).

[48] Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, Volume 1: Porfirians, Liberals, and Peasants, Reprint edition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 210.

Conventionalists fought a series of battles along the Bajío basin. The largest of these was fought outside of Celaya in April 1915, which resulted in Francisco Villa's first major defeat.

It is not surprising that Celaya saw the most change and migration from the revolution. It did not become a ghost town like Cerritos, San Luis Potosí, but it did see a drop in population as thousands of people left the surrounding countryside for the US. These were primarily agriculture workers and people from small villages rather than miners or railroad workers. San Francisco de Rincón was relatively unscathed by the major period of fighting and instead saw its violent upheaval with the Cristero War in the 1920s. Large scale migrations came later, in the 1920s, as people used older/pre-existing/networks that had been long forged networks to escape social unrest.

Migration in the Middle and Lower Classes

Because much of the early violence of the Revolution focused on border cities, migration between Mexico and the United States declined before it skyrocketed. As battles took place for Tijuana, Ciudad Porfirio Díaz (Piedras Negras) and Ciudad Juárez and as American troops moved to the border, Bureau of Immigration inspectors up and down the line reported a drastic decline in migration. The destruction of railroads and the rise in general violence made traveling across the country difficult. As mines and railroads shut down across the country, company towns froze, the population of Cananea dropped drastically as miners sought work elsewhere. [49]

[49] Much of the migrant population that had come to these industrializing towns was displaced. This was true of Asian and European migrants to Sonora, where anti-Chinese violence rose to new levels. There were also several refugee crisis episodes as the enter populations of several border towns crossed on to the US side during the height of battles for the area, the US Immigration Bureau put refugees in large outdoor pens. Eventually many of them were released in the country, many of those stayed permanently in the US Letters by Supervising Inspector F.W. Berkshire, Bureau of Immigration, 53108/71 A-Q, INS Records 85, NARA, Washington D.C; Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (Texas A&M University Press, 1993): 70-72

The first reports of migration restarting came as early as 1913 when hundreds of railroad workers arrived in El Paso. By 1915 more migrants were coming than before the war.[50]

In northern Mexico and the border region south to Torreón a large industry dedicated to border crossing was starting to take shape. Some of these migration businesses and agencies were sponsored by the large railroad and mining industries, with labor recruiters known as *enganchadores,* houses, and places to get the necessary paper work. These efforts could range from the passing of information, such as the many labor cards that were passed along the borderlands by recruiters advertising their agencies but could also be much more. Some, especially along railroad routes could be entire networks of people, businesses, and organizations that acted as a form of infrastructure that provided money, guidance, and housing along the way. In Juárez dozens of boarding houses sprung up, "offering, not only food and lodging, but effective assistance in crossing the border." Inspectors were concerned with the large number of ferries operating over the border as well as "physicians professing ability to remove the signs of disease," who offered to help people pass medical inspections at crossing points.[51] In Torreón, the newspaper *El Siglo* did an exposé on what they called "La Banda," a group of men that ran a complicated migration operation. Based out of several hotels in the city, they provided rooming houses with prostitutes, doctors who provided false certificates of health, men who produced false migration papers, and guides who ran migrants via car outside the town to board trains in order to get around Departamento de Migración inspectors. La Banda apparently bribed enough officials to the point that agents of the Departamento de Migración did not know who they could

[50] Report, April 10 1913, Bureau of Immigration, 53108/71 A-Q, INS Records 85, NARA, Washington D.C

[51] Report, 1913, Bureau of Immigration, 51463 A-C, INS Records 85, NARA, Washington D.C

trust in the city.[52] These people were already being called "coyotes" along the borderlands, a name that would stick in the population imagination of both countries.

The people who encouraged or even facilitated migration into the US from Mexico preoccupied the efforts of the Bureau of Immigration, and its Mexican counterpart, the Departamento de Migración. This has led historians and other scholars to argue that they were a driving force behind the migration, I disagree. I argue that while they may have shaped the contours of migration, family networks were ultimately much more important in spreading migration fever, and shaping how patterns developed in reaction to the Mexican revolution. Letters and testimony at the Board of Special Inquiry showed that a high percentage of migrants already had relatives in the United States, who were sending money and tickets to relatives in Mexico to facilitate their migration. Interviews with migrants confirm many of the findings by the Bureau of Immigration. [53]

Among the wide variety of experiences described in the interviews of migrants during the 1910s, two trends become apparent. The first is the extent to which the Revolution drove the migration of middle class and even some upper class Mexicans. Among the middle class were those who created many of the organizations and structures that made migration possible: founding of newspapers, boardinghouses, commercial ventures, and civic organizations. I will discuss the large number of educated people who came to make up the middle class of the Mexican communities in the US, especially San Antonio, in Chapter 3. The second trend is the

[52] "EN TORREÓN SE HACE UN INMORAL NEGOCIO CON LOS EMIGRANTES", El Siglo, 4-352-2-1926-9A EL AGENTE DE MIGRATION EN TORREÓN COAH, in Archivo Histórico del Instituto Nacional de Migración, México DF.

[53] Report from Inspector in Charge to Supervising Inspector, June 16, 1915. Bureau of Immigration, 53108/71 A-Q, INS Records 85, NARA, Washington D.C

extent to which migration networks acted as a sort of safety net to the uncertainties of economic downturn and violence in Mexico, especially for the working class.

Before the Revolution, some middle or upper class people had migrated North as the United States was a major destination for political exiles since the 1860's. Nevertheless, it was the Revolution that first brought large numbers of middle class migrants north of the border, where many were forced to work in difficult unskilled jobs. Jesus Gonzalez and his family were one example. A shop owner in Guadalajara, he told an interviewer that his shop had been ransacked by *Villista* troops and that he had been conscripted into the army from which he fled at Torreón where he took a train to Ciudad Juárez. He crossed into the United States and labored as a track laborer along the Santa Fe system, working in California, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas. He eventually became a miner in Miami, Arizona, where he told his story in 1927.[54] His story was not unique. A large number of migrants told Gamio and Taylor that they had participated in the Revolution only to migrate when their side did not win. Jesus Frano was a colonel in the Mexican Army until the constitutionalists won, at which point he left with his family to the United States and eventually organized a Cruz Azul branch and several fraternal organizations.[55] While Luciano Herrera was a Marxist and generally supported the Revolution, he was also a land-owner and had no predisposition to fight. When his friend became an officer for the constitutionalists and pressured him into joining, he escaped to Juárez where he "*reganche*" (contracted out) to the railroad; eventually he went to Los Angeles and sent back money for his

[54] Vidas la de Jesus Gonzalez, interview by Luis Felipe Recinos, BANC FILM 2332 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[55] El Case de Jesus Franco, interview by Manuel Gamio, BANC FILM 2332 REEL 2, GNEG Box 2569, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

wife and daughters to join him.[56] Others went back and forth several times before settling. Jose Rochas was a musician when the Revolution prompted him on a journey that would take him to Mexico City and Veracruz before leaving to the United States where he worked as a track laborer in the Midwest before returning back home to marry. When he spoke to researchers ten years later, he owned a barber shop in Los Angeles and had started a family.[57]

The revolution in Mexico prompted a large exodus of writers, politicians, and newspaper men to the United States, especially Texas. Spanish newspapers expanded across the country. The most important of these were the papers founded by Ignacio Lozano, *La Prensa* and *La Opinión*. Antonio Mendez Lomeli, who later worked for *La Opinión* described the growth of the paper, "The revolution forced a lot of people of the middle class to come in great numbers…in San Antonio they established the largest paper named *La Prensa*, from them came this paper *La Opinión*, they had all the great writers, polemicists, like Jose Maria Lozano, Jose Vasconcelos, Alvin Monrique …long with lawyers, General Aguilar… they brought the newspapers."[58] These writers and others established a public sphere in Mexican migrant communities.

The Spanish language press, especially in San Antonio provided jobs and opportunity to many who had come from political and journalistic backgrounds in Mexico. Involvement in Mexican politics led to a journalistic career for well-connected migrants, while others were writers and in the press before they left Mexico. Jose Lanides González was *alcalde* (mayor) of

[56] Vida de Luciano Herrera, interview, BANC FILM 2332 REEL 2, GNEG Box 2569, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[57] Vidas La de Jose rocha, interview, BANC FILM 2332 REEL 2, GNEG Box 2569, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[58] Interview with Antonio Mendez Lomeli, OH 1297, August 24, 1972, Mexican American Oral History Project, Oral History Office, Cal State Fullerton, Fullerton CA

Mapimi Durango in 1911 and a mine owner before being forced out by the revolution. He started several newspapers and eventually became the administrator of *La Prensa* in San Antonio.[59] Rómulo Munguía came from a political family, his father had been active in Mexican politics, and he was an editor for *El Dario*, an opposition newspaper before the Revolution. During the revolution, his found his situation precarious and left for Texas, where he joined the staff at *La Prensa*, and later went to work for *El Sol* in San Antonio.[60] Pedro de la Lama also came from a well-connected military family. His liberal newspaper in Veracruz was able to get away with critiques of the government because of his connection to Aureliano Urrutia, then Secretary of Government under Huerta; but he was eventually jailed forced to leave to San Antonio, where he became the editor of *La Justicia*.[61] Felipe Hale had a similar story of running afoul with authorities, in his case with revolutionaries who told him to leave the country. He went to Tucson and with his wife, published a paper and sold novels.[62] Jose Ramírez M. entered the family business, his father edited the daily paper in Guayamas Sonora but they left during the Revolution and settled in Tucson. By 1927, when he spoke with Gamio, Ramírez was the owner of various printing presses that newspapers used in the city.[63] Additionally Luis Álvarez wrote for the Mexican *El Imparcial* before leaving for El Paso where he published the journals *El Sol*

[59] Vidas, Jose Lanides Gonzales, Interview, BANC FILM 2332 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[60] Romulo Munguia, realizada por Mary Lee Nolan, July 12 1973, Archivo de la Palabra: Revolutio Mexicana, Biblioteca Central, INAH, Mexico D.F.

[61] Vidas, La de Pedro G. De la Lama, Interview, BANC FILM 2332 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[62] Vidas, Sr Felipe Hale, April 17, 1927, BANC FILM 2332 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[63] Vidas, Sr Jose M. Ramires M, May 4 1927, BANC FILM 2332 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

and *La Republica* though the 1920s.[64] These men were among the many who came in this decade and greatly expanded the scope of Spanish media north of the border, founding magazines, newspapers, journals, presses and even comic strips. In the years and decades after the 1910s the publications that were founded in this era provided an invaluable public space for Mexican and Mexican-American communities throughout the United States.

Many Mexicans who went north during the revolution settled into established Mexican-American communities, especially in the Southwest. While this inflow into older communities created tensions, the economic growth in Texas between 1914-1921 meant that both middle class Mexican emigrants and Mexican-Americans contributed to and profited from the spread of migrant networks, and from owning stores, boarding houses, and other establishments. Manuel Santa Cruz was a business owner in Chihuahua until the Revolution-induced economic depression, after which he went to the United States and made his way to Davenport, Iowa where he worked in a steel foundry before coming to own several pool halls in Chicago.[65] F. Huerta, who had left Mexico when his uncle's pro-Díaz newspaper got in trouble with revolutionaries and was conscripted, worked as a printer and on the railroads in the United States. He used his savings to send for his mother and sister who in turn promptly started a boarding house, taking in 32 boarders while he continued his work. The family acted as an economic unit wherein the women ran a small business while the man worked for the railroad. Boarding houses in particular were often the purview of Mexican women.[66] José Silva was the son of a wealthy businessman in

[64] VIDAS Luis R Alvarez, Interview, BANC FILM 2332 REEL 2, GNEG Box 2569, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[65] Interviews, Manuel Santa Cruz, Field Notes, Folder 10:8, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[66] Interview, F. Huerta, Field Notes, Folder 11:32, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

Mexico but when his family came to the United States during the revolution he became a translator for the American Railroad Express (the World War I national railroad), translating between company officials and the Mexican crews.[67] Sometimes people came out of a sense of adventure rather than fear of the violence, as in the case of two well-educated brothers who made money during the war, went to the United States "to see the world" and started a tailor shop in Chicago.[68] These migrants came to communities that were expanding rapidly. In some cases, there existed a Mexican and Mexican-American presence for generations, while in other cases they arrived in places such as the far west and Midwest that did not yet have a significant Mexican population. In both cases entrepreneurial middle-class Mexicans played a major role in establishing functioning communities and keeping links to Mexico, imagined and real.

Migrating to the United States became a solution for many who had lost everything during the Revolution. Rudy Hernández's parents came from Zacatecas in 1916. As they described it to him, "it was very ugly, there was no food, or where to live. There were fires they were destroying houses, everything was chaos, no order." They came by train into Texas and eventually settled in California.[69] Trini Gamez's parents and grandmother, Guadalupe Álvarez Sánchez, shared similar stories with her about losing everything in the Revolution; they crossed

[67] Jose Silva, Folder 11:46, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[68] La Estrella tailor Shop, Interviews, Folder 11:33, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[69] Rudy Hernandez, OH 3828, Orange County Colonias Oral History Project, California State University, Fullerton, CA

into Texas and became migrant farm workers in the cotton fields.[70] Sr. Saballo was a laborer in Morelos, Michoacán and worked for a *hacienda* when the revolution made earning a living much more difficult and he decided to leave. He came through Laredo where he worked in several industries including cotton and track labor before going to Gary Indiana and became a boarding house owner.[71] Also in Gary, Lacario Lopez from Zamora Michoacán, put it to Taylor "I had to leave because the revolution was '*muy fuerte'*… We had formally all been in the United States, and we had gone back to Mexico to stay permanently, but when I could not make a living I left my wife and children and came to the United States. Our *'tierra'* has more believers in the teachings of our forefathers, of this reason the revolution is stronger in Jalisco, Guanajuato, and Michoacán. I send $30 every two weeks to my wife and children."[72] The precariousness of life for many of the poor was explained by Sr. Martínez to Paul Taylor, "I used to do a trading business in Mexico taking goods from one part of the country to another and selling them. The revolutions put an end to that though... I used to live with a woman in Mexico… I did not care for her particularly at first but I came to love her a great deal so that when the financial situation became such that I was unable to go back to Mexico when I had expected I was deeply hurt and even cried. What is the use of loving a woman if one cannot earn enough to support her?"[73] Not

[70] Trini Gamez went from a migrant farm worker to an important labor organizer and legal advocate in the 1960's and 70's. Yolanda Romero, "Trini Gamez, the Texas Farm Workers, and Mexican American Community Empowerment" in *Mexican Americans in Texas History*, ed by Emilio Zamora, Cynthia Orozco and Rodolfo Rocha, (Texas State Historical Association, 2000)

[71] Mr Saballo, Interviews, Folder 11:33, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[72] Locario Lopez, Interviews, Folder 11:34, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[73] Translations and word choice by Paul Taylor. Martinez, Interviews, Folder 11:70, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

everyone had to face these challenges by themselves, but for many of those who did, the Revolution forced them to start life anew in the most difficult of circumstances.

Many people turned to relatives on both sides of the border in order to make ends meet. Serafin Sánchez, who had been already in the United States several decades and was the owner of a small ranch in Agua Dulca, Texas, told Taylor in 1929, "During the revolutions of Madero and Zapata I wrote down to my relatives when they sought a place to go so they came here from the interior of Mexico."[74] Two other men told Taylor similar stories. One was a worker in a *hacienda* who explained, "then came the revolution. Things went pretty bad with Mexico for a long time and I was conscripted into the army of Carranza. I left the army as soon as I could come to the United States". The other man explained that they were from Zacatecas and that when he left with his family:

> On the way we met a family at Colonia Juárez who has some people who had relatives in the Pecos Valley in the United States. They had received letters from them saying how good business was in the United States and the high wages after the war. We too had heard that in six months we would able to buy a car and have a piano for my little girl who liked music. When we crossed the Rio Grande at El Paso we found out that there were no easy jobs and that the work was very hard indeed and we were lucky to get work. It was not very plentiful down there and there were a lot of Mexicans coming each day. We had to work in the cotton field, all of us, that first year, and we worked very hard.[75]

[74] Sarafin Sanchez, August 13 1929, Interview, Folder 10:7, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[75] Notes, "Three men at Hull House", interviews, Folder 11:33, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

Despite the hardship they eventually found railroad jobs on the Santa Fe; they "heard that things were good in Illinois" and made their way to Chicago. That is not to say everyone found success north of the border. Few made enough money to quit the migratory life even if most wanted to eventually return home. Discrimination, low pay and exploitation were common experiences in the US. Yet for many who were forced to start anew in the aftermath of the revolution, migration offered a promise of a better life and enough found the benefits worthwhile to return to the United States again and again.

Migration becomes a "Fever"

In 1917 the United States entered World War I. Mass migration from Europe and what migration remained from Asia to the US ended with the war, the restrictions of 1917, and Johnson-Reed Act of 1924. While the Immigration Act of 1917 made migration back and forth harder for Mexicans, creating the first literacy tests and raising immigration fees, the countries of the western hemisphere, including Mexico, were not included in the 1924 quotas. As a result, many Mexicans continued to take advantage of the expansion of the economy though the 1920s. In 1925 the US Border Patrol was founded and two years later its Mexican counterpart, the Departamento de Migración. Both sought to reduce Mexican migration, but they succeeded mainly in lowering the level of *legal* migration. The Mexican population in the US continued to grow to about one million Mexican born people in the US by 1930. The patterns established in the early 1920s remained intact until the onset of the Great Depression, and served as an overarching framework into World War II, as later chapters illustrate.

Between 1917 and 1920 migration from central Mexico ballooned, peaking at 80,000 legal entrants and between 20,000-50,000 more who entered without paying the entry fees or came as non-statistical entrants and then over-stayed. The wartime economy caused a rise in prices of staple crops and minerals which in turn increased demand for Mexican labor, which led to the expanded use of their labor beyond the borderlands and deep into the United States. Wages were momentarily higher than ever before. In Texas, wages paid for labor, from clearing lands to picking cotton, shot up. On May 20, 1920, *La Prensa* ran an ad that announced: "I need land breakers to go to Three Rivers, Texas, to break up 2000 acres. Wages of $12.00 up to $40.00 per acre… I pay with pure silver. C. M Pose (The Paunch)." But even as wages in Texas rose, the same newspaper carried ads for land breaking in Michigan that began at $35 per acre.[76] Wages went down after a recession in 1921, but were sufficiently high to continue to draw large numbers of migrants until the Great Depression.

In remembering that period, Mexican migrants tended not to mention the various laws or the efforts of border authorities; instead they tended to remember how the economic and social climate affected their own decisions. One migrant describing San Antonio put it, "you should have seen it in 1918-1919. There were many more Mexicans than whites. With the need for *braceros mexicanos* they came over the border as fast as they could. They came by train, by stage, auto and wagons. Many came on foot."[77] Aguilera, a migrant from Monterrey, years later in 1927 described a similar phenomena: "when I first began to hear very much about the United

[76] "Necesito Desenraizadores para ir a Three Rivers, Texas, para deseraizar 2,000 races *sic). Precio de $12.00 hasta $40.00 por acre. pago con pura plata… C.M.Posey (El Pason)" *Migrant Border Ballads Project*, "Migrant Border Ballads Project Records, 1979," Benson Library, University of Texas, Austin": Pg 38

[77] "Old Resident in the Harbor", interviews, Folder 11:33, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

States some seven or eight years ago it seems that most of those whom I knew were coming to the United States were coming to study and when they went back they told the others of the opportunities that there were in the United States for work."[78] A beet picker in Texas who came in 1920 exemplified how far word could travel: "we came from Michoacán to Laredo and then we went near San Antonio grubbing land. We stayed there one week and then went with my uncle to bells (Belline) town... We heard about the sugar beets. I had heard about beets and cotton in Michoacán."[79]

Others remembered the spike in wages across a large variety of fields. One man told Taylor, "the first time I came to the United States was in the war time. In 1918. I went to work in October in the vicinity of San Antonio picking cotton. In those days the wages for picking cotton were good. They paid $3 a quintal. Then after that things slowed down and I went back to Mexico in 1920." Another remembered, "I left Mexico in early 1918. That was during the war. Things were very quiet down there then. I was in the United States labor was scarce and wages were good so I came up here. They paid $3.50 for a quintal of cotton. I came up to Texas by way of Laredo from Matamoros."[80] Sr. Caribales, a fellow migrant and boarding house owner remembered, "The companies here needed help. They sent *enganchistas* to the large Mexican

[78] Aguilera, Interview by Robert C Jones, Folder 11:71, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[79] Translations by Paul Taylor. Unnamed picker, Bermuda Texas, April 24 1929, Folder 10:5, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[80] "Old Resident in the Harbor" & "Man who was waiting for the Ice Man", interviews, Folder 11:33, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

centers in this country and to the border. After that it was not necessary, the tide has set and they came by themselves."[81]

As information spread throughout central states of Aguascalientes, Michoacán, Jalisco, Guanajuato and San Luis Potosí there was increasing disagreement in Mexico over whether the stories told by returning Mexicans and recruiters were myth or fact. Article 123, section 16 of the 1917 Constitution held that Mexican workers needed a contract to leave as workers and that the contractor had to provide certain guarantees. However, after the US ended its wartime exemptions for contract labor in 1921, the Mexican government became more anti-migration. During the exemption period in the late 1910s the Federal government sought to work with contractors, but these plans were often thwarted by local authorities who did not want to lose local labor. Mexican consuls in El Paso and Arizona reported that while they worked with companies and contractors, state authorities in Chihuahua blocked their efforts while authorities in Sonora held back miners from leaving Cananea.[82] After Obregón became president, however, the Mexican federal government shifted to a stance that migration was a tragedy for the nation that held back development, and that migrants were abused and cheated in America. In the early 1920s the federal government worked with local government to collect and spread stories of abuse. As Fernando Alanis noted, "the government emphasized the precarious situation of the laborers in Ciudad Juárez in order to prevent emigration. The *jefe político* of Bravos District, Chihuahua, did the same".[83] Mexican newspapers in general opposed migration. In 1926 Mexico

[81] Sr. Caribales, interviews, Folder 11:33, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[82] Fernando Saul Alanis, *El Primero Programa Bracero y el Gobierno de Mexico 1917-1918* (Colegio de San Luis Potosí, 1999): 38

[83] Fernando Saul Alanis, *Que Se Queden Alla: El gobierno de Mexico y la Repatriacion de Mexicons en Estados Unidos 1934-1940*, (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte / El Colegio de San Luis Potosí, Mexico, 2007): 41

established its own border patrol that sought to work with US officials in order to limit the migration north. Consuls repeatedly warned about abuses and urged migrants to go back to Mexico.[84] Chapter five deals with these developments at length.

On the other side of the border many in the Mexican-American and exiled Mexican community in the United States were also ambivalent about the arrival of these migrants. People in the Spanish-language media, while defending migrants against American abuses and efforts to place a quota on them, also told Taylor that the stories of opportunity were exaggerations and that it would be better for everyone if migration slowed down or stopped. Javier Tovar, a prominent Mexican in Detroit, told him, "the high wages at Ford's attract the Mexicans as well as others. Some Mexican from a small country community in Mexico writes home and says that he is getting six dollars day up here and that each American dollars is worth two Mexican pesos and since the majority of the people cannot read the word is passed from mouth to mouth becoming more exaggerated as it goes until some get to thinking that money can be shoveled up in the streets here and there is a wholesale movement up here where they find that there is a lot of things which they did not take into consideration."[85]

In the aftermath of World War I, the recession in the United States, and the rise of Alvaro Obregón to the presidency of Mexico, there was a renewed effort in Mexico to establish power over the national space and implement the 1917 constitution. This included efforts to enforce migration laws that banned those who did not have contracts from leaving the country in keeping with Articles 123 of the constitution. Mexican officials pressed American officials but did not do

[84] Kelly Lytle Hernandez, *Migra! A History of the US Border Patrol* (University of California Press, 2010)

[85] Corrected Taylors misspelling of his name. Javior Tovar, July 30, 1928, Interview, Folder 11:70, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

much more than make token efforts until after 1924. With tens of thousands of Mexicans suddenly out of work in the US, Obregón personally managed the response. He expanded the number of consuls in the US and sent them money to pay for food, shelter, and return tickets for Mexicans north of the border. Obregón's government focused on a repatriation program for those who wished to return after the recession of 1921. Of the more than 100,000 repatriated in 1921 alone, approximately half received some assistance from the Mexican government. The government even started to move forward in creating agricultural colonies for repatriates after reports came that they didn't have jobs or land in their home towns. However, funding ran out for repatriation, and no colonies were ever funded. Yet the idea of returning Mexicans establishing farms and bringing modern skills was introduced into the rhetoric and minds of post-revolutionary policy makers, something that would have long term consequences in the 1930s. Still, even as the program sought to bring people back, even more were preparing to go the other direction. [86]

Despite the lack of support from both governments as well as elites and the many obstacles placed in migrants' path, the early 1920s saw a normalization of circular migration. Migrants for the most part used going north as a strategy to improve their economic position *in Mexico*, and saw their stay in the United States as temporary, as chapter five will argue. While middle class Mexicans tended to migrate in family groups and settle in one locality, most labor migrants were men, the majority of whom left their families at home. The vast network of railroad connections, banks and post offices to send remittances, and the temporary nature of most of the jobs, meant that people were able to work in one place part of the year and live the

[86] Lawrence A Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897*-1931: Socio-Economic Patterns (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980), 96-118

rest in another. It was usually not until a person had worked for years in the US that they brought their families north.

This was true even among migrants far removed from the borderlands. Aureliana Aguilera went back and forth from his home in Morelia and Detroit. As he told researcher Robert C. Jones, "I first came to the United States in 1918. I went back in 1920 and returned in 1921, went back again in 1924 and returned in 1925 and have just gotten back the first of this year from another trip. It is such a short way that one can easily return. The fare to Laredo from Detroit is about fifty-six dollars and from there to my town it is about twenty-six pesos."[87] Sam Ramírez's circular movement actually began many years before coming to the US when he became a migrant in Mexico. "When my parents died in 1912 I went from my town in Michoacán to Mexico City to get work to support my two younger brothers. In 1917 I had heard about the United States so I came. I went to work on the Pennsylvania Railroad, and then returned to Mexico, but I returned to the United States and went to California. Then I returned to Mexico and this time in order to see another place I came to Gary Indiana where I have worked ever since."[88] Talking to migrants going back to Mexico on a train, inspector W.C. Nester noted that one man "was going back on a thirty day leave with his wife and two babies born in the United States to visit relatives in Mexico. They reported that there was no work in Mexico and

[87] Auraliana, Aguilera, Interview by Robert C Jones, Folder 11:70, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[88] Sam Ramirez, Interview, Folder 10:6, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

that they like the US. One man said he had returned to Mexico every year since 1917, i.e. for eleven years."[89]

Corridos (ballads) sung in central Mexico made their way along the tracks to major cities. While some sang about lost love, famous outlaws and Revolutionary exploits, recounting brave men who stood up to Carranza or the Texas Rangers, others reflected on the experience of migrating in the early 1920s. One *corrido* sung by Cecilo Chávez outside Union Station in Los Angeles was heard by a graduate student at UCLA who wrote it down.[90]

Ya vamos en el camino	*We're on our way*
Llegando a ciudad de León,	*Arriving at the City of Leon,*
Y admirado me quede	*Admiring her I stayed*
Al ver su iluminación.	*To see her lights.*
Al llegar a Aguascalientes	*Arriving in Aguascalientes*
Con mucho gusto y esmero,	*With pleasure and care,*
No arregle mi pasaporte	*I haven't fixed my passport*
Por la falta de dinero.	*For lack of money.*
Luego pasa Zacatecas	*Then I went to Zacatecas*
Con muchísima atención,	*Paying a lot of attention,*
En el tren de pasajeros	*In the passenger train*
Se me partió el corazón	*I broke my heart*
Llegamos a la estación	*We arrived at the station*
Que se llama de Fresnillo,	*That was called Fresnillo*
Donde todo mexicano	*Where every Mexican*

[89] Inspector W.C. Nester and Yard Master Trinidad Romero, Folder 10:4, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[90]Translation by Daniel Morales. "Puro Mexico", 1939, Mexican Folklore Survey, Federal Writers Project, Box 187 Folder 3, 306, Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles CA

Visita a un milagroso Nino.	*Visits the Miraculous Nino.*
Pues muy cerca de Fresnillo	*Well very near Fresnillo*
Se ven los boscosos cerros	*You can see the forested hills*
Donde se encuentra también	*Where you can find*
Ese Nino de Plateros.	*That Child of Silver.*
Santa Nino del Fresnillo,	*St. Nino of Fresnillo,*
Tu me has favorecer,	*Thou hast favor,*
Santo Nino de Plateros	*Santo Nino of Silver*
Tu me concedes volver.	*Grant me that I may come back.*
Ya va caminando el tren	*The train is leaving*
Hasta llegar a Torreón,	*To get to Torreón,*
Santo Nino de Fresnillo,	*Santo Nino de Fresnillo,*
échame tu bendición	*give me your blessing*
Ya llegamos a Chihuahua,	*On our way to Chihuahua,*
Pues ya de aquí me despido,	*Well, from here I say goodbye,*
Adiós, mi Patria querida!	*Farewell, my beloved country!*
Adiós, todos mis amigos!	*Farewell, all my friends!*
Ya con esta despido	*Now with this Goodbye*
De mi Patria Mexicana,	*From my Mexican homeland,*
Ha llegado a Cuidad Juárez,	*I have come to Cuidad Juárez,*
Oh Virgen Guadalupana!	*Oh! Virgin of Guadalupe!*

This particular *corrido* captures the route that many people took, from Guanajuato up to Torreon to Cuidad Juárez and El Paso on the Mexican Central Railroad. It also illustrates the decisions people made as they weighed the risks of migration, whether or not to secure passports and legal entry, and the spiritual nature of the journey as the narrator decides to visit an

apparition of the Christ Child to gain his blessing. In another ballad a man from Guanajuato sings about his state as he leaves by to the US. Like the first ballad, there is a strong ambivalence about going north, about abandoning their homes and families. In both cases, the author asks for blessings before leaving and tells his audience that he left because he was forced to, unable to make a living in his hometown.[91]

Me voy triste y pesaroso	*I'm sad and regretful*
A sufrir y a padecer,	*To suffer and to suffer,*
Madre mía de Guadalupe,	*Mother of mine Guadalupe,*
Tú me concedas volver.	*I ask you that I may return*
México es mi madre patria,	*Mother Mexico is my country,*
Donde nací mexicano;	*Where Mexican I was born*
échame tu bendición	*Give your blessing*
Con tu poderosa mano.	*With your mighty hand.*
Me voy a Estados Unidos	*I'm going to the U.S.*
A buscar mi manutención,	*To be able to support myself*
Adiós, mi patria querida,	*Goodbye, my beloved country,*
¡Te llevo en mi corazón!	*You are in my heart!*
Pues yo no tengo la culpa	*Well I am not at fault*
Que abandone así mi tierra,	*That I abandoned so my land,*
La culpa es de la pobreza	*It is the fault of poverty*
Que nos tiene en la miseria.	*That we live in misery.*
Pues ya voy en el camino	*Well, I'm on the road*
Y salí de Salvatierra	*And I left from Salvatierra,*

[91] Translation by Daniel Morales. "Songs of the Mexican Migration", Mexican Folklore Survey, Federal Writers Project, Box 187 Folder 3, 306, Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles CA

Has Madre mía de La Luz,	*I pray Mother of Light,*
Lo que yo volva a mi tierra	*That I may return to my land*
Ya llegamos a Celaya	*We're here to Celaya*
Con mucha resolución,	*With resolution,*
Adiós, adiós Madre mía,	*Bye, bye Mother of mine*
Purísima Concepción!	*Immaculate Conception!*
Vamos llegando a Irapuato	*We're arriving at Irapuato*
De paso para Silao	*On our way to Silao*
Madre mía de Loretito,	*Mother of Loretito,*
¡Haz que vuelva a tu lado!	*Let me return to your side!*
Llegamos a Salamanca;	*We arrive at Salmaca;*
Adiós, senior San Pascual,	*Goodbye, San Pascual,*
Échame tu bendición	*Give me your blessing*
Padre mío del Hospital!	*My Father of Mercy!*
Adiós, Guanajuato hermoso,	*Goodbye, Guanajuato beautiful,*
Mi Estado donde nací,	*My state where I was born*
Me voy para Estados Unidos,	*I'm going to the United States,*
Lejos, muy lejos de ti	*Far, far away from thee*

In another ballad, about the 1920s that was written down around 1930 by researchers in Texas was performed by Manuel Esquivel in the 1970s. It captures some of the excitement that migrants felt going north in that time.[92]

[92] Translation by Daniel Morales. “My Voy Para el Norte” Music by Manuel Esquivel, Libro de Oro la Cancion, found in home of Sostenes Martinez, Thelma, Texas. Migrant Border Ballads Project, “Migrant Border Ballads Project Records, 1979,” Benson Library, University of Texas, Austin”: Pg 387

¡Qué dices, mi vida?

Nos vamos al Norte

Ya tengo todo arreglado

Para que pasemos, tengo el pasaporte,

Ya me lo dio el consulado.

¡Qué bonito es querer!

¡Que reculo es amar!

Y bazar entre lindas flores!

Tu bien sabes, mi bien,

Que no te puedo olvidar,

Chatita de mis amores.

Los dos nos iremos

En el pasajero Con destino a la frontera

Iras en mis brazos,

dueña de mi vida,

Aunque tu mama no quiera.

Bonito es el norte… nunca se me olvida,

Porque se gana dinero

Yo soy mexicano que adoro a mi Patria,

Que para mi es el primero.

Nos vamos al Norte, cuna del norteño

Llevándote yo a mi lado,

Nos vamos al Norte, tierra del ensueño

Llorado del repatriado.

What do you say, Darling?

Let's go up North.

Everything is arranged,

I have the passport,

The consulate gave it to me so that we may cross

How beautiful it is to love!

How lovely it is to Love!

To take delight among pretty flowers

You know well, my love,

That I can't forget you,

My little sweetheart.

We'll leave together

On the train that goes to the border.

You'll ride in my arms,

Mistress of my heart,

Even though your mother is opposed.

The north is lovely, I'll never forget it,

Because you can make money,

I'm a Mexican that adores his homeland

And for me that comes first.

Let's go up north, cradle of the northerner

With you at my side,

Let's go up north, Land of dreams,

Cry of the repatriated..

This ballad is much more positive than the first two: a man who has been north before sings to his beloved to join him in traveling north, where the two lovers can travel and be free of her mother. Unlike many migrants in his era he already has papers, and seems to know the path north. He justifies his decision to leave Mexico to his audience with how much money can be earned in the United States. He sees migration as an opportunity to leave rather than an exile, both economically and socially from his station in life. Migration was not an easy decision: traveling thousands of miles in order to find work meant leaving family and home behind. Yet it was also a decision that could be worth the risk, especially if one knew someone who had left, if one had a guide or at least knew of contacts to ask for a job lead.

This dual position: migration as opportunity, migration as exile, appears repeatedly in accounts. They were not mutually exclusive. Rather, they capture the deep ambivalence many felt about the inherent contradictions in migrating. These types of personal connections and decisions had large cumulative effects and are what made these central states different from the rest of Mexico, and why mass migration became part of life there first.

In central Mexico, where many people were already leaving, the pull was hard to ignore. Pedro Macias, a farmer in a native town in Penjamo, Guanajuato told Gamio that he came in 1921 after "the boys of the town talked about the United States and this and that" to the point that he was convinced to go. He became a railroad worker and in 1923 he went back home and told his own stories.[93] A man interviewed by Taylor in Indiana described the cumulative effect of circular migration on certain villages.

[93] Vidas, La de Pedro Macias, Interview, BANC FILM 2332 REEL 2, GNEG Box 2569, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

> I came from a small town in Jalisco three days by horseback and one day to ford from a railroad. I came to Cuidad Juárez in 1910. I lived alternatively there and in El Paso until 1923 when I came to Chicago. I found no work, but a friend brought me to Indiana Harbor where I went to work in Inland Steel… In 1925 I returned with my mother to Mexico to my native village and stayed a year, but we returned to the United States though we had planned to stay in Mexico… in the partition of land by the *Agraristas* the owners were left the poorest parts away from the water, and the rest was given to persons outside the village. Therefore, there wasn't so much work as in the days of the *haciendas*. In my village about half of the men have come to the United States.[94]

Information and Migration

Something peculiar happened at Santa Gertrudis de la Carbonera, San Luis Potosí in 1923. Antonio Barron returned to his family after several years away. This was not in itself an unusual event, as dozens of men had left in the previous ten years to work in other places in Mexico. What was different, was that he was coming back from the United States. He came back and told stories of the north and in the years after his return, his brothers and other family members also went north, joining him on his trips.[95] Larger towns in the valley like Cerritos and Rioverde, which were both just several miles away, had long connections to mining, railroads, and migration, but Santa Gertrudis de la Carbonera did not until the 1920s. It was a small and precarious link, but in a region with many links and a railroad line, it was enough to start a long history of migration for the town that in 1927 became its own municipal seat and renamed itself

[94] "Unknown Mexican", Interview Page 28, Folder 10:8, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[95] Martinez, Onorio, Oral Interview, San Luis Potosí December 19th 2013, Villa Juarez,

Villa Juárez. In Guanajuato, both Celaya and San Francisco de Rincón had by 1920 developed into sending regions where over time had hundreds of people were going based on large town centered networks. Chapter five looks at how family networks worked in these towns and how they changed with political and economic circumstances.

The spread of information, especially once the infrastructures that supported migration were created, was hard to control. In the late 1920s, Mayers of Watkins Labor Agency in St. Louis acknowledged how little control the agency had over the flow of migrants. Asked how Mexican migrants came to him he answered "they hear other Mexicans talk about work in restaurants, barber shops, pool halls, and hotels and labor offices; they learn about work from merchants… the Mexicans write many letters at the camps; they ask for postage, stationary etc; rooming houses; ads in *La Prensa*. Many in the railroad camps subscribe and from then twelve papers will be delivered in a camp of twenty-five. About twenty percent of the Mexicans take *La Prensa* in railroad camps".[96] Information traveled by word of mouth, by people migrating back and forth, through letters, and by newspaper. While *La Prensa*'s circulation was only 15,000 by the 1920s, it was read across a large geographic area in western United States. The paper was read orally as people passed the paper from person to person or read it in groups, much as *Regeneración* had been two decades before.

The unprecedented migration numbers alarmed officials on both sides. In 1920 the Archbishop of Guadalajara urged priests to "defer in a prudent, yet strong manner, the faithful from the *migration fever* that appears to have overtaken all Mexicans, making them understand that the lack of work that practically forces workers from other parts of the county to migrate

[96] Mayers, Interview, Folder 10:5, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

does not exist in the archdiocese." His effort, however, was not very successful.[97] By the mid-1920s migration, especially circular migration, had become one of the most popular responses to the economic and social disruptions that had occurred in Mexico since the 1880s. While economic links between the two countries made mass migration possible, it was not until the Revolution that it really took off. Thus, even as industrialization and revolution framed migration, they were not the mechanism by which they became ingrained in central Mexico.

In looking at the regions where migration became a part of life several patterns are clear. Migration could not have occurred without the economic transformation of central and northern Mexico, the high population growth, the loss of autonomy and stable hierarchical societies turned millions of people primarily into wage laborers. As land was lost and rail, factories, and mines were built, many in central Mexico turned to migration in order to survive. Migrants from Central Mexico provided the labor that made the industrialization of northern Mexico possible. This was a double edged sword for both capitalists and workers alike as people followed the logic of the new economy farther, into the US and its employers.

The revolution upset this balance even more, turning what was a migration of single men into one of families and people from various social classes and backgrounds. These migrants tripled the size of the Mexican population in the US in less than ten years. The pull of the US wartime economy combined with the push of the Revolution, so that it is not really possible to separate push and pull factors from the words and interviews of migrants. Motivations are always difficult to parse.

[97] La Epoca 3, num. 148 (12 de Septiembre de 1920), Quoted in Laurencio Sanguino, "The Origins of Migration between Mexico and the United States, 1905-1945" (PhD Diss., University of Chicago, 2012); pg 99.

However, when looking at cumulative actions it is also clear that mass migration was not an impulse or a conspiracy by agents, companies or governments. People chose to go and the particular patterns of how migration fever spread in central Mexico emerged from personal interactions on the ground. In some places almost half of the men of working age emigrated, while other places were hardly affected at all by the migration fever. While accounting for economic and landownership patterns gives us a partial answer as to why certain areas had migration, it does not really explain the entire difference: other parts of Mexico had similar economic profiles yet did not send many migrants north. Migration did not develop uniformly. It arose in certain areas and went to certain places because of the ways in which information traveled and the infrastructures developed. A combination of economic disruption, violence, and interpersonal networks was needed to start a chain of migrations, with the latter being the key in keeping migration going. Within this process, migrants, especially middle class Mexicans, created organizations, businesses and a public sphere that gave additional structure to the migratory system. By looking at the actions of the migrants themselves we can begin to rebuild the networks that guided people back and forth.

In the early twentieth century, migration took on a new dimension as it expanded, made use of information and infrastructure networks and increasingly became normalized in many parts of central Mexico. While this migratory system continued to grow until the Great Depression, it was not a uniform or unchallenged expansion. Later chapters turn to the nature of circular migration in the 1920s, and look at different regions and industries in the US in order to see how local circumstances pushed Mexican migrants to develop new and increasingly complicated strategies.

This chapter has looked at how economic, political, and social changes brought about during the *Porfiriato* created many of the conditions that launched migration between central Mexico and the United States. Yet this migration could not have occurred without the actions of the migrants themselves. Despite the hardships many migrants faced and would continue to face in the late 1920s and 1930s, when asked about when and how they came to the United States, they sometimes remembered the time when migration was new, when they saw people returning and wanted to go themselves. Looking back many years later Sr. Huerta described his decision to leave, "the majority of the people in Mexico are satisfied with their condition. They suffer in silence and plod on in their simple lives. Lots of men say in spite of the revolutions, poverty, and other evils ' *Aquí estamos tranquilo*…' it is those who are not satisfied with that who come up here".[98] Many of the people, who wrote their stories down, gave interviews with researchers, social workers, and government officials seem to have shared his view. Leaving home was a highly personal decision, one made for a multitude of reasons, yet in all these individual choices they took part in the creation of something new, for better and worse- a new way of life that would affect millions of people over next century.

[98] Interview, F. Huerta, Field Notes, Folder 11:32, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

CHAPTER 2

Counting the Uncounted

Mexican Socioeconomic and Migration patterns in the United States, 1900-1940[1]

In the early twentieth century migration from Mexico to the US went from being a small regional phenomena concentrated in southern Texas to national phenomena in both countries. In 1907 US Immigration Bureau counted fewer than 2000 Mexican immigrants entering the US but seventeen years later it counted nearly 90,000 migrants arriving in a single year.[2] However, size is not as important as understanding the nature of this migration from Mexico. Making use of new data from two census cohort studies, one national, and a local case study in Chicago, this chapter outlines the shape and patterns of migration and socioeconomic mobility among Mexican migrants between 1920 and 1930. From the cohorts, I also argue that limited economic mobility was primarily caused by a segmented labor market that kept most migrants within certain industries and jobs from the 1910s forward. It is also clear that for the vast majority of people, ongoing migration remained a central fact of life from the 1910s though to the Great Depression. In this chapter I argue that, with two major exceptions, migrants often migrated within the US and back to Mexico at far larger rates than the historical literature would suggest. Migration patterns that have been written and thought about as regional are in fact, national and transnational processes. The combined trends of a segmented labor market and continual mobility suggest a series of economic imperatives for Mexican migrants that are separate from

[1] Special thanks to Professor Oliver Randall of Emory University for assistance in the study.

[2] Though as will be explained later in this chapter, the actual numbers of migrants were much greater than this.

the causes of migration, but rather an economy based on cheap migrant labor that spread across the United States in these years.

In the historiography of Mexican and Mexican/American history, there is little attention paid to the process of migration in this era, especially the causes and effects of migration on the local and regional level. There is a large literature dedicated to the study of more recent migration patterns, with various disciplines ranging from sociology, anthropology, political science, and history contributing to our understanding of how networks and circular migration contribute to ongoing migrations. However, most of this literature arose after the 1965 Immigration Act, and has shown little interest in new studies of historical migration before the Bracero Program (1942-1965). Most migration studies focus on circular movement well after it became established. We have little data on how migration patterns come into being or change over time. Of course there are many monographs of Mexican and Mexican-American history that cover this era. This literature has focused on the creation and growth of Mexican American communities and not on the process of migration. As a result, the literature was underestimated the extent of migration- both circular and internal to the US, and deemphasized the role of continuing migration in shaping communities. This has led to an underappreciation to the ways migrants stayed connected to communities back in Mexico, and how this fact shapes the course of migration patterns.

Those who have addressed 1900-1940 Mexican migration have done so from above – analyzing structural causes and implications. There is no question that the industrialization of the Borderlands between Mexico and the US and the violence of the Mexican Revolution created many of the conditions that propelled migration. Both official and unofficial numbers closely follow events in the Mexican Revolution, the Cristero Wars, and economic events like the post

WWI recession, and the Great Depression (See chart below). But, while these events influenced the overall volume of migration, they do not explain variances in migration, how one town could be unaffected while another close by could send many migrants. In the last chapter, I explained how a close examination of two states in the central and north-central region of Mexico, Guanajuato and San Luis Potosí, demonstrate that as members of particular towns began to migrate into other parts of Mexico they encouraged family members and acquaintances to join them. As members returned from other places in Mexico and the US, they began to bring back money and information, which helped to encourage further immigration. A feedback loop was created that perpetuated the spread of these movements across the region. Although scholars of European and Asian migration have studied how patterns of network migration become produced and reproduced through circular migration as people and information going back and forth, we have surprisingly little understanding of this process in historical Mexican migration.[3]

In order to study the formation, operation, and reproduction of the circular migration networks between Mexico and the US in the early twentieth century, a new set of data was needed. Toward that end, I conducted the largest demographic cohort study ever been made of Mexican migrants in the early twentieth century. Making use of the US Census, Mexican Census, border manifests and crossing cards, and city directories, this study follows the movement of several thousand individuals from 1910 to 1930. Additionally, I follow a cohort of people in a single city, Chicago, throughout this period in order to show migration patterns on a

[3] Madeline Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration Between the United States and South China, 1882-1943*, (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000); Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Marianne Sophia Wokeck, *Trade in Strangers the Beginnings of Mass Migration to North America* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); Jose C. Moya, *Cousins and Strangers: Spanish Immigrants in Buenos Aires, 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

local scale. Record linkage permits a type of mass tracking that has not been previously possible in historical research for this period. Showing the extent of spatial, social and economic mobility among Mexican migrants in different urban centers, the cohort study reveals that ongoing migration, both inside the US and between Mexico and the US, was the norm for the majority of Mexicans. In fact, migrants coming to a place and staying for a lengthy period were a minority, even in large communities such as Los Angeles and San Antonio. More than 50% of the migrants in the study migrated internally and externally within a few years. The study of Chicago shows many of the same results in an extreme manner, but a similar pattern holds true for the southwest. While a substantial minority was in fact settling in the US, the primary story of migration in this era belongs to those for whom continual migration was a way of life.

The study shows that Mexican migration during these years was not a single predictable process, but rather included a wide range of behaviors and patters that followed different trajectories. Residential and job patterns from the study show that while a significant minority were settling in rural farms or urban spaces, the majority were not. These two significant exceptions to the main trajectories in the study of the migrants say a lot about the way Mexican migration operated. The first of these exceptions is farm workers who had access to land, the majority of whom were tenants in Texas. They had the highest rates of stability, with a significant portion staying within several miles of where they had been in 1920, with the second generation doing the same. The second exception to the rule was the emerging urban middle class. These were boarding house owners, the Spanish newspapermen, the skilled tradesman working with other migrants, the teachers in migrant communities, the small businessmen and grocers who sold Mexican goods as far as Michigan. They played a particular role in migrant communities; their livelihood depended on Mexican migration, and in turn they were a key part

of the structure of immigrant life. This relatively stable class of migrants that arose from the migrations of the 1910s and those who were primarily migrant laborers lived in the same neighborhoods, worked in the same spaces, and were often members of the same families. The stable migrants were those that successfully climbed within the migrant economy rather than separate from it into the mainstream American economy. They were a minority of Mexicans in every location studied, and even in the largest most diverse cities the tendency for the non-middle class was to leave after some amount of time.

With the exception of tenant farmers and the urban middle class ongoing migration was a fact of life for the vast majority of Mexicans in the US. They moved according to the particulars of industry that employed them, or between industries and regions. While the trajectories of settling in a location and migrating between different places could be thought of as counter examples of assimilation and identity formation in both countries, I argue that this is not how scholars should look at the relationship between these migrants. Most Mexican migrants did not have the option of a good job to settle down into. Socioeconomically, the national and Chicago cohorts both showed limited economic mobility among Mexican migrants, and among the second generation. Migrants were likely to have a similar type of job than they had ten years previously, and the young adult second generation worked in the same occupational class as their parents, though exact job was often better than ten years previously. This is likely because migrants in this era were coming to work in only a few industries, where they were segmented into a separate labor and economic market than the US population in general. Migration often seemed a better option than staying in a bad situation. Migration from place to place in the US, and back to Mexico was itself a critical strategy, and so was moving from job to job. As I will explain in later chapters, workers frequently left for higher wages, better conditions, or flexibility

even if they stayed in the same occupational category. This is especially important when looking at migration inside the US, where migrations across regions and industries was fairly common.

At least half of the Mexicans in the sample, and probably more, circulated back into Mexico in the 1920s. More than 60% of people do not show up again in US records within ten years anywhere, and at least some can be positively identified as living in Mexico in 1930. This "disappearance" of these individuals in the data is not merely an absence of data but may be considered a positive finding suggesting that a majority of the migration in this era was short term and circular in nature. This is especially true of the young men who made up a majority of the people in the study. In later chapters I will show that for these migrants, especially men from central Mexico, the primary purpose of migration was to earn money to go back to Mexico, and the majority of Mexicans migrants in this time period did exactly that. Their lives were primarily oriented towards Mexico even if they lived in the US.

The Uncounted

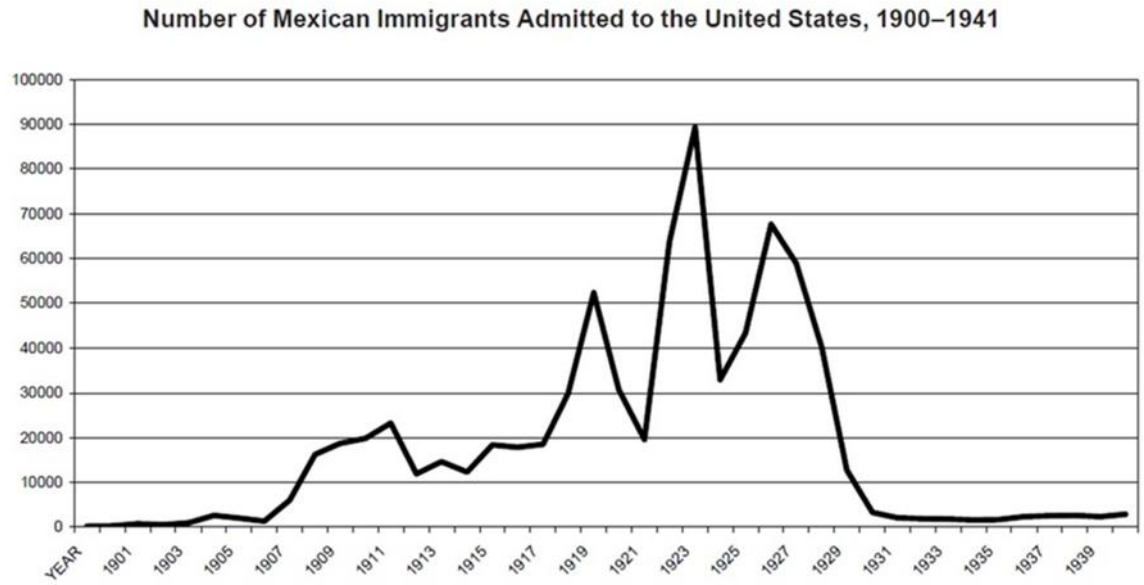

Table 2.1 Official numbers of Mexican Immigrants to the United States 1900 and 1940. Source: [US Census] Number of Mexican Immigration Admitted to the U.S.

Official numbers of Mexican migration from this era peak at 89,000 in 1924. Although the actual immigration figures are much larger once accounting for all types and forms of Mexican migration, the trends are relatively correct. However, the official data do not capture the nature of the back and forth movement between the two countries [Table 2.1].[4] More importantly, Table 2.1 only includes people who came through the Immigration Bureau's checkpoints, stated their intention to live permanently in the US and met all corresponding regulations and fees. After 1917 this included a literacy test and $18 head tax, not an insubstantial amount for a migrant to pay, especially if they brought a family. The chart also does

[4] A large migration right before the Revolution, made up of mostly men in going to agriculture in Texas, railroads, and mining zones across the southwest. Followed by a drop in the early years of the revolution, and then a large increase in the later years of the revolution, especially after the start of World War I. The recession of 1921 triggered the first large scale repatriations of Mexicans but it was followed by a boom in the late 1920s. The drops in 1925 and starting in 1928 however are primarily due to increasing enforcement and attempts to limit legal migration, the drop in 1925 in particular is unlikely to reflect a drop in actual migration.

not include non-statistical migrants, who are people who crossed by the official entrance but were not considered immigrants. They could be a border town resident crossing for a day to someone who said their visit would be for less than six months and was not going to work in the country. The Bureau of migration did not keep a number of how many non-statistical entries were being made each year until the 1920s. Also not included are the 73,000 workers who were brought in under exclusions to the 1917 Immigration Act and Alien Contract law (1919 to 1921), who were thought to be only temporary workers. In both cases, many of the people who came to labor temporarily ended up laboring in the US a lot longer. And most significantly it does not include the people who simply walked over the border. The Bureau estimated from 10% to upwards of 50% of the total number of Mexicans crossing the border simply never presented themselves to a border station, depending on the year. Mexican anthropologist Manuel Gamio in describing the circular and unreliable nature of migration between 1920-25 noted that "

329,269 Mexicans departed for the United States, and – surprising fact- in the same period not only that number returned to Mexico, but 228,449 more!"[5]

While the Bureau of Immigration did not count many sources of migration, scholars have been able to use Mexican government data to substantiate a greater volume of migrations. Gamio used these records to offer his own estimate of 890,000 Mexicans in the US in 1926, 438,000 "immigrants" and 230,000 transients who were staying a short time to work in the U.S.[6] More recently, Fernando Saul Alanis found Mexican officials counted 22,000 Mexicans leaving to the

[5] Manuel Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States; A Study of Human Migration and Adjustment., New edition* (New York: Dover Pubns, 1971), 9-10.

[6] Preliminary Report "Antecedents on the Mexican Immigration in the United States", Folder 3:1, BANC FILM 2332 REEL 3, GNEG Box 2570, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

US in 1906, about ten times the US recorded number of entries. In 1908 more than 16,000 people passed into El Paso alone, and in 1910 Mexican officials pegged the number at 50,000. Victor Clark of the US Labor department estimated about 100,000 between 1900 and 1910.[7] The problem of persistent undercounting did not get better after US officials started to pay more attention during the Mexican Revolution. Thousands of people continued to pass as non-statistical migrants, saying they would stay for fewer than six months and not work. Others were part of the World War I-era exemptions and others did not bother to register at all and became undocumented migrants after the war. In the later part of the revolution, Alanis estimated the migration at several times the official tally, in 1916- 17,198 people crossed legally and 83,766 as non-statistical migrants. In 1917 the numbers rose to 16,438 and 123,484 respectively. These numbers are much higher than the traditional non-statistical border crossers who lived on the border could possibly account for.[8]

Both United States and Mexican officials estimated that the numbers who went back to Mexico every year was more than half of the total number that arrived. However, a major source of the problem in counting how many migrants came to the United States is that many were going back and forth without any documentation. To give one example, the US Census reported a total 927,000 immigrants from Mexico between 1910 and 1928, yet Mexican authorities had 1,085,222 returnees reporting themselves as coming back within a shorter time period. Manuel Gamio argued that approximately 470,000 Mexicans permanently settled in the United States and that the other million or so in the US were migratory workers who circulated between

[7] Fernando Saul Alanis, *Que Se Queden Alla: el gobierno de Mexico y la repatriacion de mexicans en Estados Unidos* 1934-1940, (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte / El Colegio de San Luis, Mexico, 2007): Pg 36

[8] Fernando Saul Alanis, *El Primero Programa Bracero y el Gobierno de Mexico 1917*-1918 (Colegio de San Luis potosi, 1999): Chart 1

Mexico and the United States.[9] The estimates of Lawrence Cardoso and Paul Taylor are more conservative, 826,877 arrivals with US authorities recording 145,684 and Mexican authorities recording 1,050,256 departures from the US they record a similar phenomenon.[10] Again, the flow back and forth is far too large for non-statistical migrants to account for, and must involve a significant proportion of people who were going north to work. While the sheer volume of traffic and the large number of people going through as non-statistical migrants make it hard to pin down how many people were going back and forth, it appears that at least half of the non-statistical crossers should be considered migrants, and that at least as many were crossing back into Mexico every year. In other words, the distinction between immigrant and non-statistical migrant is not useful for the case of Mexican migrants, and both should be considered when talking about this movement.

The Mexican Migrant Study

With this problem in mind, we turn to the study that lies at the center of this chapter. The goal of the study was to trace the contours of migration, to see where people were going, when, and what happened to them over time. As such it is not designed to answer the question of how many people participated in migration or went back to Mexico. Scholars have considered these questions and I believe it is more fruitful to examine the migrants themselves. The study is thus designed to track migrants over time, not in the aggregate because that changes over time as

[9] Manuel Gamio, "Quantitative Estimates: Sources and Distribution of Mexican Immigration to the United States" BANC FILM 2332 REEL 3, GNEG Box 2570, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[10] Paul Taylor, Migration Statistics, *Mexican Labor in the United States*, Vol 1, University of California Press, 1932; Lawrence A Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States 1897*-1931 (The University of Arizona Press, 1980)

people entered and left the country, but as individuals, in order to see where they went and how they fared. As such the study follows a random sample of Mexican migrants over ten years with smaller checks in the years before and after the time line.

The sample is drawn from a random selection of the United States population in 1920. I chose 1920 because it was the first year for which a large number of Mexican migrants first appeared in the US Census.[11] The overall random selection was 0.5% of the US population from IPUMS, from which I eliminated everyone except those born in Mexico. This gave me a random sample of about 5,000 people born in Mexico residing in the United States in 1920 and their families. I sought a relatively large sample because previous census research has shown various biases in the data, usually towards those who are wealthier, have families, and own land; and against single men who are mostly agricultural laborers in the fields, railroad tracks, or mines. A large sample captures a greater number of individuals who are underrepresented in the census data. With a larger sample, the data will be better, although the bias is not eliminated and still needs to be addressed in the analysis.

The 1920 sample grew to 6073 when relatives and dependents were added to the list. Because we are trying to show changes over time among a migrant population, one where the composition of neighborhoods and locations were changing constantly, a normal census study that looks at changes in a given location is inadequate. Instead this study looks at each and every single one of those individuals, so that instead of an aggregate study that suggests an anonymous stand in for all Mexicans, my sample comprises a cohort that is followed over a period of time. I tracked the cohort from 1920 back in time to the 1910 US Census, and forward to the 1930 US

[11] Data came from the University of Minnesota Population Center- IPUMS-USA.

Census and the 1930 Mexican Census. When possible information was gathered from border crossing cards. This involved a laborious process of looking up each individual's census card across three decades.[12] In the 1910 census about 300 people from the 1920 census were identified, and in the 1930 censuses 958 people from the original group of six thousand were located in the US and 122 in Mexico, creating effective cohort from 1920 to 1930 of 1080 people. I used GIS to track the special mobility of the sample migrants from 1920 to 1930, allowing us to see where people were living relative to each other and to the general population.[13]

In addition to the main quantitative study, I undertook a smaller version of the census cohort study of Mexicans who were living in Chicago in 1920 in order to show how these trends worked in a single locality. In order to create a good sample, I needed a relatively random sample and also one that was reasonably easy to track. In order to create a random sample no distinctions were made among the available base pool, which consisted of every Mexican-born male in Cook County in 1920. [14] The alphabet was divided in half, with A-L in one half and M-Z in the other, which gave two halves of comparable size.[15] The first half was randomly selected,

[12] Ancestry.com was used to find individuals.

[13] This proved more accurate in urban settings where people were more likely to have exact addresses, rural migrant workers were the most difficult to pinpoint.

[14] Women were difficult to track since their names tended to change with marriage and the Census itself places a preference on heads of family. As women only made up a fourth of the Mexican immigrant population in Chicago in this decade, the chances that the absence of single women head of households would radically change the sample results were minimal. Fernando González del Campo Román, *APELLIDOS Y MIGRACIONES INTERNAS EN LA ESPAÑA CRISTIANA DE LA RECONQUISTA* (Tus Apellidos 2003-2005, at http://www.tusapellidos.com/surnames.htm)

[15] Concerns have been raised over the possible bias of one half of the alphabet over the other. This could be a possible problem as a large number of Spanish surnames are taken from geographic locations or from titles, some even heraldry (Caballero or Hidalgo for example) and could lead to a predominance of one type of occupation and class over another. While this is a concern, I have found little evidence that predominance in names in certain

and a total sample was created by adding each of these individuals with their families and dependents (if any). The sample came out to 521 male heads of household, who make up the main population studied, and their families for a total of 931 individuals.[16] This sample group was followed through the 1930 Census.[17] In order to compliment the sample population and to compare it with other groups, US Census tract data was also used. This data allowed me to create maps of Mexicans' spatial locations within the city and to compare their residential location to that of the major immigrant and racial groups that lived in close proximity to the Mexican immigrants. The reports of the 1920 and 1930 Censuses were used to create a reference group against which to match the sample population.[18]

This study, with two sample populations, one national and one local, use the definitions and categories of locational and social mobility long established in the immigration literature. These studies used census, nationalization and other government records to show the

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classes continued in Mexico and the US into the 20th century, though this is a consideration one should take into account

[16] This also gives a since of how small the community in 1920 was despite its growth before 1920, it is estimated that the actual Mexican population of the city was closer to 3,000 than the 1310 found by the Census. This is still small compared to Chicago's largest ethnic groups, the Polish at 137,000, the Germans at 112,000 and the Russians at 107,000. Ernest W. Burgess and Charles Newcomb, Edit, *Census Data of the City of Chicago 1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), pg 21.

[17] Scanned versions of the paper census are available at: Heritage Quest, http://www.heritagequestonline.com/prod/genealogy/index for the 1920 Census. The 1930 scanned census is available at Ancestry, http://www.ancestry.com/ and Census tract data was available on GIS form at the University of Wisconsin.

[18] Ernest W. Burgess and Charles Newcomb, Edit, *Census Data of the City of Chicago 1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931); Ernest W. Burgess and Charles Newcomb, Edit, *Census Data of the City of Chicago 1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1933). These reports can be found in the Municipal Library of the Harold Washington Library in Chicago. (the 1930 report copy has a hand written note from Charles Newcomb to Hugh Young of the Chicago planning commission on its cover, and a forward by Edith Abbot with useful demographic information) While the reports were edited by the same people they did not focus on the same things. The 1920 report had a wealth of information on industries and the costs of housing and living in the city; the 1930 report on the other hand was unique in its focus on the community area of Chicago with information available for each one but less on the city as a whole. Unfortunately, neither of these could be used to their potential because many of these figures simply did not exist for the sample population.

acculturation, spread, and economic mobility of selected immigrant populations. I use their definitions when I believe they shed light on how Mexican migrants adjusted to life in the US but do not use them when I don't think the methods would help. Scholars, going back to Stephan Thernstrom in his classic work on the immigrant working class of Boston, have run into a particular problem in following a cohort across time, that working class men (often from immigrant backgrounds) disappear from census and official records. This is especially the case in studies that look in only one city or region. This was a major reason I undertook a national and transitional study, and the smaller Chicago study follows people across the country. The only other major study of return migration was undertaken by Zachary Ward, who found that return migration was very common in the pre-Depression era among European and Mexican migrants. He found that while the bulk of European migrants who returned were those who had done worse in the US labor market, Mexicans who returned to Mexico had the exact same characteristics as those who stayed (among single men). Collaborating my arguments in later chapters, he also found that people from the Bajio central states of Mexico were the most likely to return home. Many of my results were the same, but with even a larger share of workers disappearing from the records. I will argue that this is large a result of the migratory nature of the work Mexican migrants undertook. It is also consistent with the high levels of return migration scholars on European migrants found in this era as well, especially the migrants from southern Europe.[19]

[19] Stephan Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970* (Cambridge, Mass.: Universe, 1999); Joseph P. Ferrie, *Yankeys Now Immigrants in the Antebellum United States 1840-1860* (Oxford University Press, 1999) And. Thomas Kessner, *The Golden Door: Italian and Jewish Immigrant Mobility in New York City, 1880-1915*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Zachary A. Ward, "The Circular Flow: Return Migration from the United States in the Early 1900s" (Ph.D., University of Colorado at Boulder, 2014).

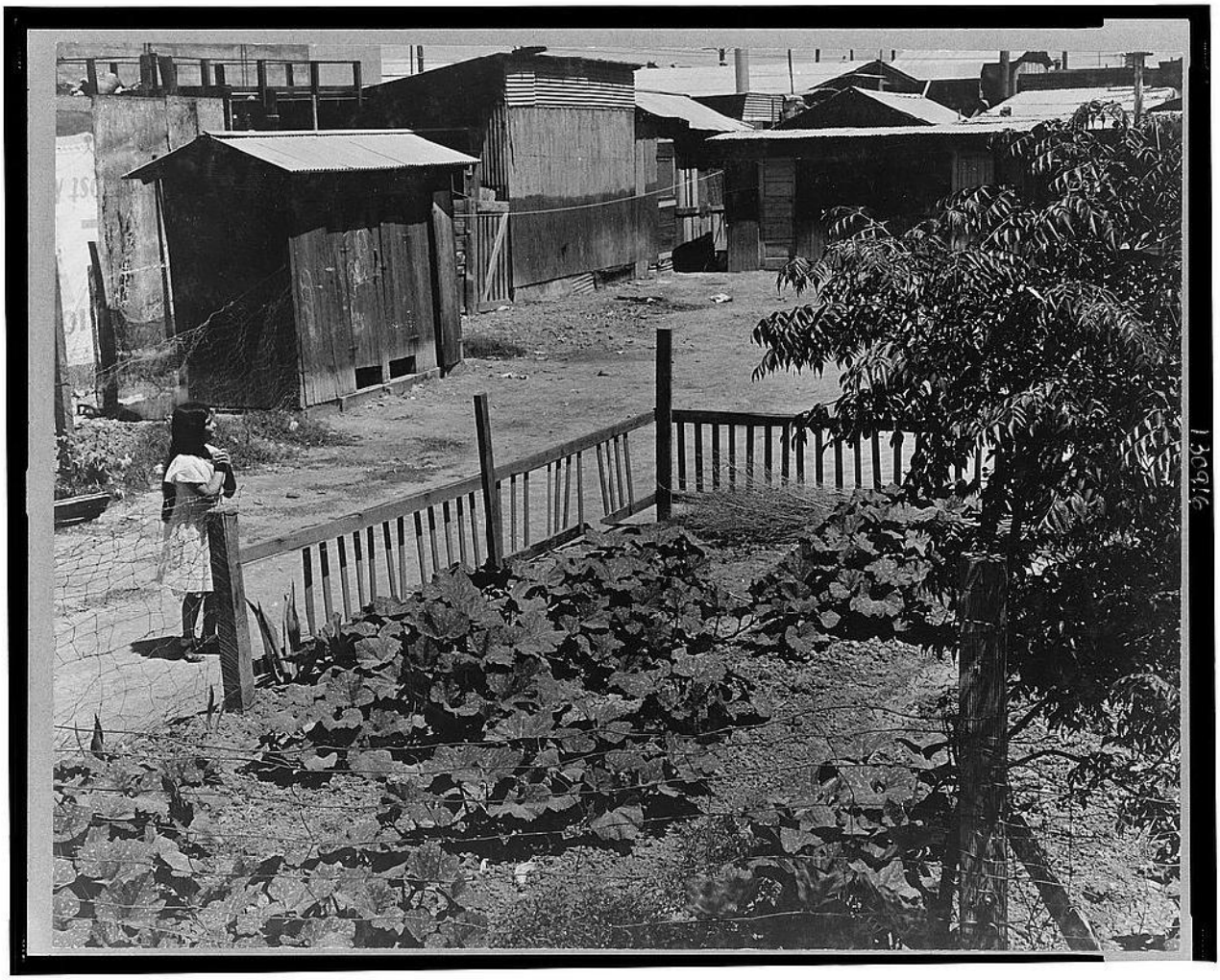
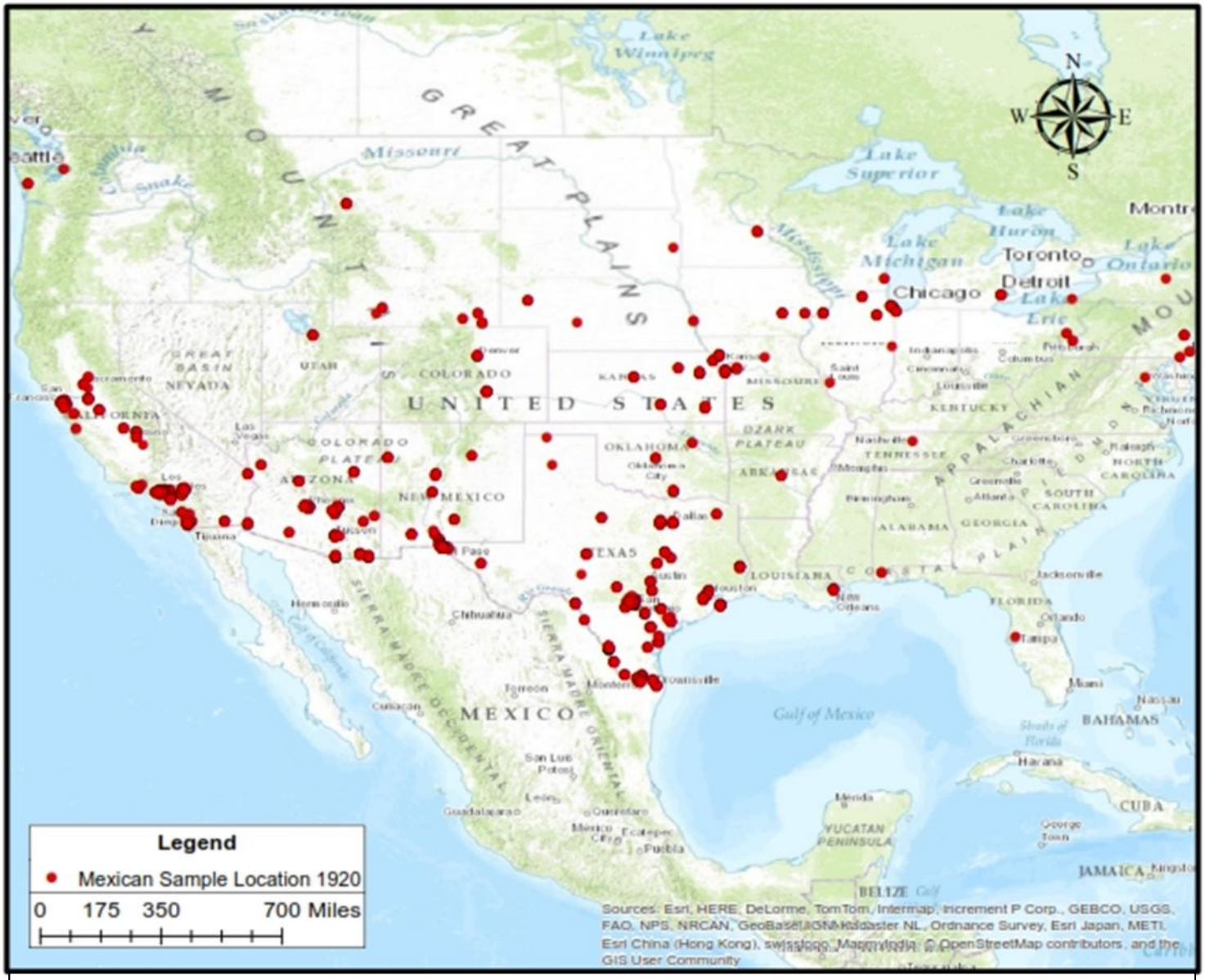


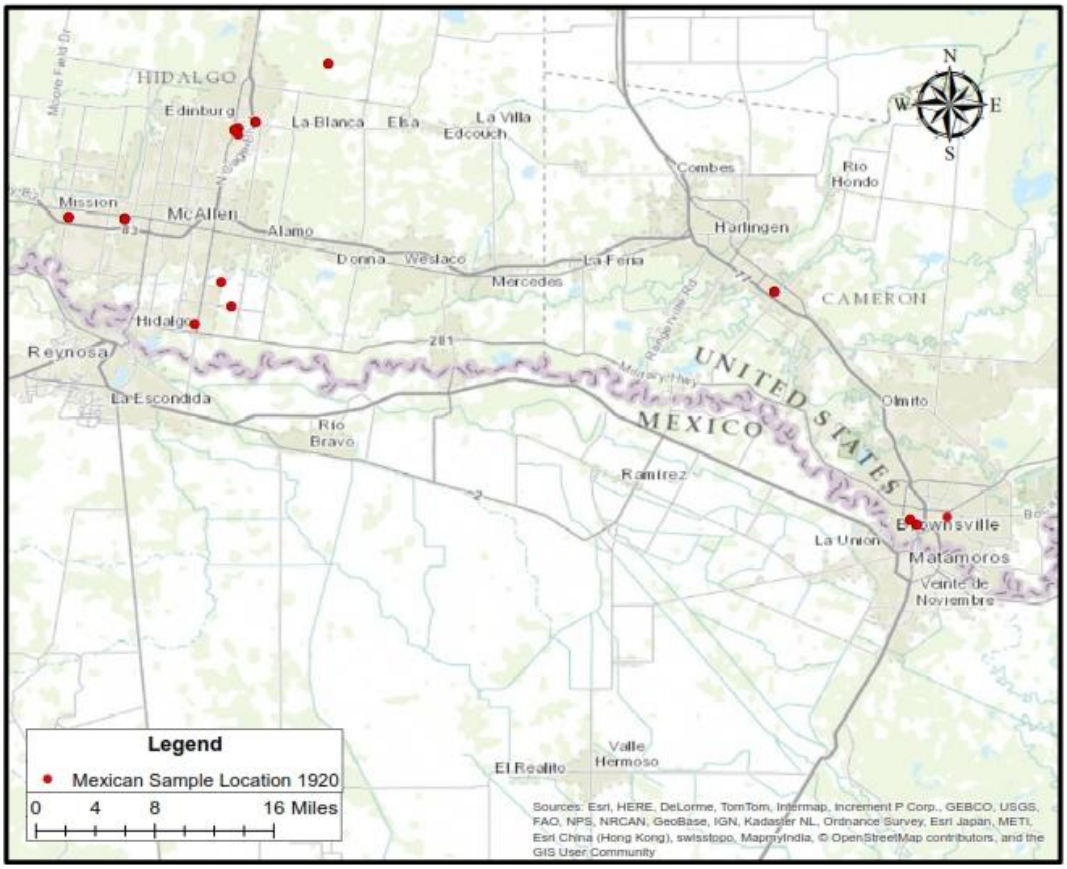
Image 2.1 Living conditions of agricultural workers in California. The irregular condition of homes that were often off formal grids, language problems, and the fact that Census workers often filled in the answers meant that the different census were often inconsistent and locating individual families from descriptions proved nearly impossible.

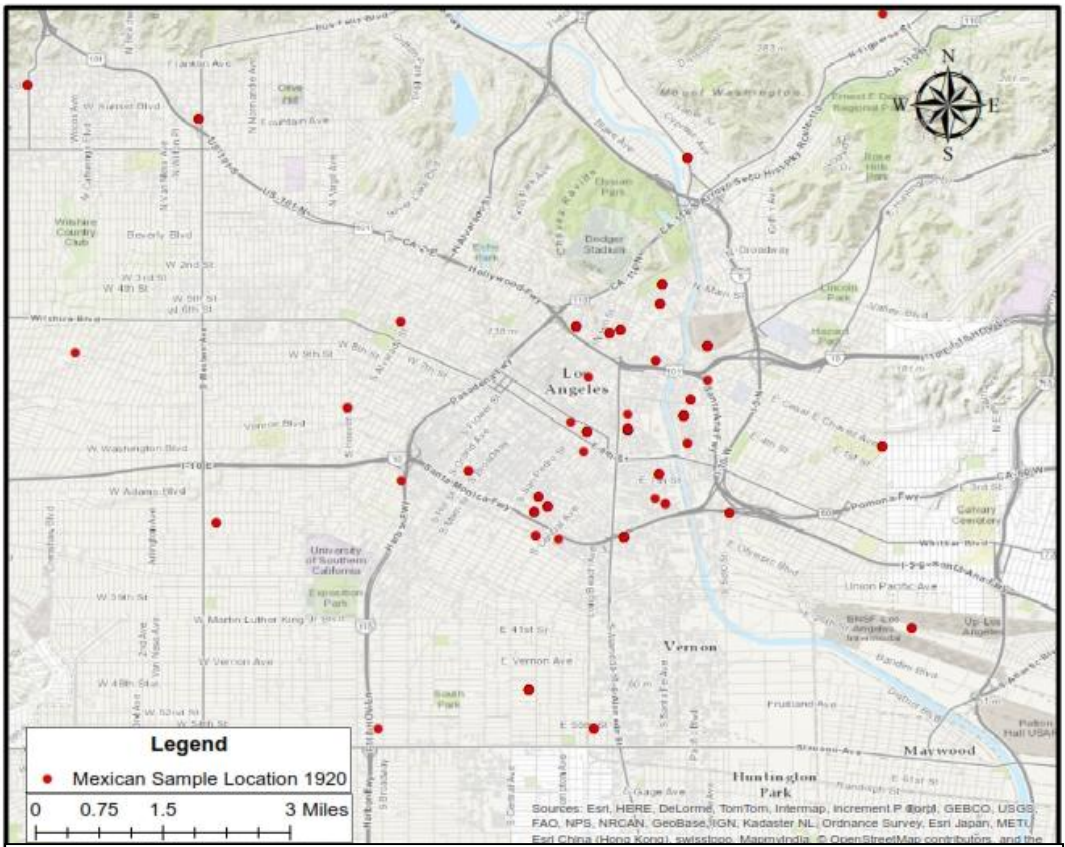
"Mexican field laborers' houses." Brawley, Imperial Valley, California. June 1935." Photo by Dorathea Lange. LC-USF34-T01-002339. Library of Congress (Washington DC).



Map 2.2 By 1920 Mexican migration was already spread across the west along railroads and agricultural routes. Each dot represents one address where Mexicans were living in 1920, whether a single person, a family or a labor camp.

Location of Mexican Sample in 1920. By author, using ArcMap GIS.





Map 2.3. Mexican and Mexican-American communities have long been established in Texas. *Location of Mexican Sample in the lower Rio Grande Valley 1920.* By author, using ArcMap GIS.

Map 2.4. By 1920 central and east Los Angeles were home to tens of thousands of Mexican migrants, mostly from Central Mexico.

Location of Mexican Sample in East Lost Angeles 1920. By author, using ArcMap GIS.

Where are Mexican Migrants living in 1920?

By 1920, Mexican migrants had already spread out from the borderlands and across the United States. The railroad, cotton, vegetable, fruit, and sugar beet migration routes that were just coming into existence in 1910, were solidly in place by 1920. As seen in Map 2.2, the dots represent about a third of the Mexican sample population, those whose exact location in 1920 could be positively identified. Each dot stands for a residential address. Even with a high miss rate, (i.e. the inability to positively locate the address of two thirds of the people in the sample) the dots give a fairly representative illustration of the extent of the spread of Mexicans across the United States by 1920.[20] By 1920 Mexicans in the sample were found in most states in the US, although still heavily concentrated in the borderlands where they worked in agriculture, especially cotton. Significant populations lived in the fruit and vegetable growing areas of California, the mining region of Arizona-Colorado, the sugar-beet region stretching across the entire Midwest from Colorado to Michigan, and along the major railroad routes in the West that concentrated in Chicago. Large communities also existed in places as far removed as Louisiana and Florida where Mexican migrants worked on plantations and Pennsylvania where they worked in mills for Bethlehem steel.[21] For the most part, however, Mexicans lived and worked along transportation and agricultural corridors. In major hubs like Los Angeles, San Antonio, and El Paso, migrants were spread across the metropolitan region though concentrated in specific neighborhoods. In other places such as the Rio Grande Valley, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Arizona, they were concentrated along agriculture, railroad and mining corridors.

[20] This is more accurate in urban areas than in rural areas where many locations had no address or a vague one, while a lot of effort was made to find approximate locations, most rural areas were hard to literally pin down.

[21] Paul S Taylor. *Mexican Labor in the United States Vol. II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1931)

Looking at the total number of people in each place however reminds us how much migration out of the borderlands was a new process in 1920. 1920 is the base year from which the sample is taken and hence is also the only year where we have data on all six thousand people. The 1920 base group allowed for a large picture of the Mexican population in the US as a whole. This population is overwhelmingly based in Texas. More than three times as many Mexicans lived in Texas than any other state in the sample, followed by California, Arizona, and New Mexico. Only then do Midwestern states show up in totals.

Table 2.2. Eight States with the largest Mexican Population, 1920

State	Number	Percentage	State	Number	Percentage
Texas	3179	53%	Kansas	163	2.7%
California	989	17%	Colorado	145	2.4%
Arizona	754	12.5%	Oklahoma	66	1.1%
New Mexico	275	4.6%	Illinois	64	1.06%

Source: Daniel Morales, sample of Mexican population in the US, from US population census, 1920

The 1920 sample indicates that 53% of Mexicans lived in rural areas, yet only about a third worked directly in agriculture. The US Census has a well-known bias towards stable families in immigrant populations, and it is probable that this is changing the results. This is especially the case with housing, where 4733 people were reported living in single family homes, and only 202 in official boarding houses. Yet of that 4733, about 700 were single men boarding with other families. Mexican families often had various sources of income, and taking in boarders was a common way for families to decrease the risks of the migrant labor market.

What did Mexican migrant population look like in 1920?

The sample cohort is consistent with demographic knowledge we have of Mexican migration in this period. While scholars had long thought that Mexican migrants before 1965 were overwhelmingly single young men, recent studies have shown that many families and women migrated as well; that most men were in their 20's rather than just entering adulthood; and that significant numbers were married and had families in Mexico. These trends are all true of the sample population. There were slightly fewer than 2000 heads of households in the 1920 sample, and on average they had two or more dependents with them. This figure is misleading because most "heads of households" were actually single men; and there was a significant minority of large families. Combined, these data result in an "average" of two or more dependents but that implies a much greater number of families than existed. The sample population does have more men than women, 55% to 45%, and a majority are also single 52% to 42% married, but not overwhelmingly so. The sample population had spent an average of eight years in the United States, longer than I anticipated. Likewise, the average age was 26.25, older than people normally assume, but younger than the 29 age average that Zack Ward found in his own study of this population.[22] About 60% could read while 58% could write, which makes them slightly more educated than the Mexican population in Mexico in general. However, only 32% could speak English; 68% only spoke Spanish. Overall these trends do some reflect a bias towards more settled people, however it is much less than in the 1910 and 1930s census, with a large population of single male workers that isn't captured in the other censuses.[23]

[22] Zachary A. Ward, "The Circular Flow: Return Migration from the United States in the Early 1900s" (Ph.D., University of Colorado at Boulder, 2014); Ch 4.

[23] The demographics of the Mexicans and their families in the sample are within a few percentages of the general Mexican-born population of the US in 1920, This gives me some confidence in arguing that they are a representative

Where were Migrants working in 1920?

While the literature has focused on agricultural workers, the majority of Mexican in the study did not work directly in the fields. The people in the sample were employed in a much broader set of jobs and industries than the literature would indicate, with railroad workers and industrial workers together making up a slightly higher number than those in the fields. Table 2.3 shows only a third worked directly in the fields, though many worked in industries that were ancillary to agricultural work. Railroads, manufacturing and mining were the largest industries after agriculture, while 8% were general common labor and the rest were spread among many other industries.

Table 2.3. Six Largest Industries/Types of Labor performed by Migrants, 1920

Industry	% of Working Pop	Industry	% of Working Pop
Agriculture	34%	General Labor	8%
Railroad	18%	Mining	4.5%
Industry/Manufacturing	20%	Other	15.5%

Source: Daniel Morales, sample of Mexican population in the US, from US population census, 1920

However, when it came to skill level, most tended to be at the bottom, and there were almost as many skilled laborers as semi-skilled ones. Making use of the same categories previous studies of migrants have done in order to make sense of the hundreds of different jobs migrants performed, Table 2.4 breaks down the sample into levels of skill required for each job. These are skill indicators, correlated, but not direct indicators of social-economic status. For example, a grocery clerk is white collar, but not necessarily well off. But in general they are indicators of job type, location within the larger economy, and settlement. When looking at the Mexican migrants in the sample, more than 90% worked in some sort of blue collar job with “laborer”

sample of the Mexicans in the US with the exception of an oversampling of middle class families. This will be important when looking at how these families fared afterwards. 1930 US Census

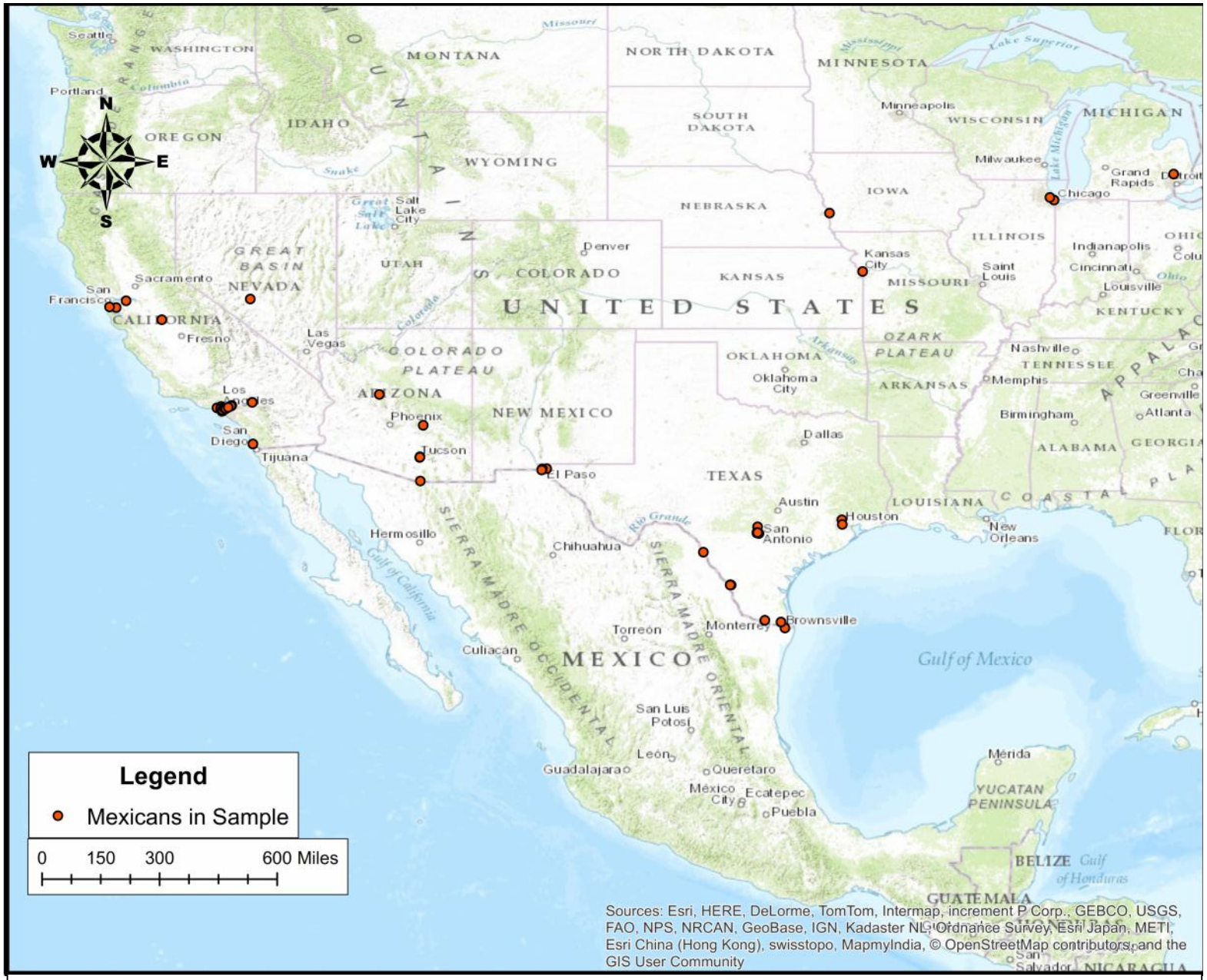
being by far the most common job description. This was true in both agricultural jobs and industrial jobs. There was also a significant minority who were skilled workers, a sixth of the sample, with skilled mining jobs and heavy industrial jobs leading the way.

Table 2.4. Skill Level among Mexican Workers, 1920

Unskilled	60%	White Collar	5.5%
Semi-Skilled	16.6%	Professional	2%
Skilled	15%		

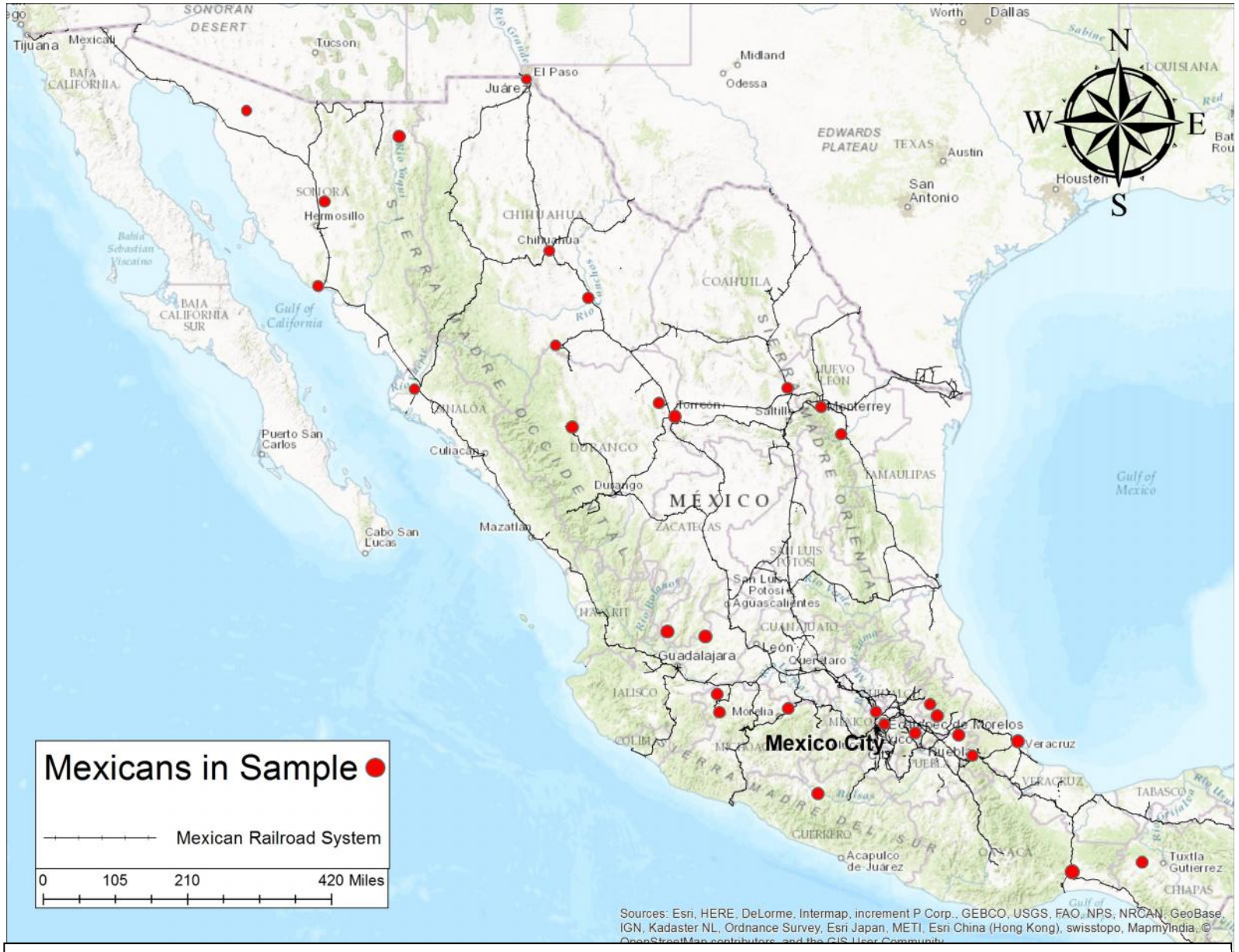
Source: Daniel Morales, sample of Mexican population in the US, from US population census, 1920

Overall, none of the demographic descriptions of the Mexican sample population in the US in 1920 are surprising in light of recent literature or recent studies. There is an oversampling of large families and white collar workers because the Census in general did a better job of tracking them, but because I wanted to track as many people as possible I did not venture to correct this, and I don't believe it changes the results. We can still consider what happened to these people over the next ten years.



Map 2.5. By 1930 most migrants were not positively identified, though some trends could be seen in those that remained in the sample.

Location of Mexican Sample in 1930. By author, using ArcMap GIS.



Map 2.6. For those Mexicans having been positively identified as going back to Mexico, the majority went to towns and cities with railroad stations.

Location of Mexican Sample in 1930 in Mexico. By author, using ArcMap GIS.

Uncounted Sample Population

In looking up the individuals and families from 1920 in 1930 it quickly became clear that the most significant result would be that which was missing rather than what was found. Two thirds of the sample in 1920 were not found again in 1930 in either the US or Mexican Census. Of those found about three quarters of the sample found were in the US and one quarter was in Mexico. This figure, however, is misleading. From the available evidence, I believe a majority of the missing individuals were in Mexico in 1930.

While most people could not be completely identified again in either census, they were much more likely to have candidates in the Mexican Census. For example, for a male who was without a family in the 1920 US Census, there might be a dozen people with his name and age Mexico in 1930, making it impossible to positively identify them with any confidence. There were about 200 such cases. We could not narrow the choices especially among young men of similar names. This was also sometimes the case in the US but it occurred at a much lower rate because of the availability of other supporting documents like city directories or border crossing cards. A significant proportion of these workers were also living migratory lives in the US, where the census could not capture them. This reasoning led me to conclude that even through the majority of people completely identified again were in the US, not Mexico, the majority of the people in the overall sample were migrant workers, with no fixed home in the US, with a high probability they were in Mexico.[24]

[24] Zack Ward comes to a different conclusion in his study of Mexican migrants, and argues that only 44% of migrants returned to Mexico by 1930. This is based on the belief that transcription errors and Anglicization is more likely in the US than in Mexico. However, I was able to find many of the people who had changed their name or other markets of identification, while it did happen, I don't believe it was common enough to change the sample. The Mexican 1930 census was much more likely than the US 1930 census to miss people however, and the large amounts of potential people in Mexico convinced me that the opposite was more likely. Zachary A. Ward, "The

The findings must be interpreted in light of the fact that so many people could not be positively located again ten years later, there is still the issue of those who were identified in 1930: 1080 individuals belonging to two hundred fifteen distinct families or heads. This is enough to draw patterns and trends from, especially in the US, and it is they whom the rest of this the study is focused on.

Where are the Migrants Living ten years later?

This was even a problem with the GIS mapping, where only a few dozen of those who were found again had location/addresses accurate enough to be placed in a map. Those who are not found speak volumes. It suggests that the majority of people in most major cities were not living in the same city in 1930 than in 1920. To prove this, we also ran the sample names through city directories. In a majority of cases, people only showed up once around 1920 and not in later years. Map 2.5 shows the location of families in the US while Map 2.6 shows the location of families in Mexico.

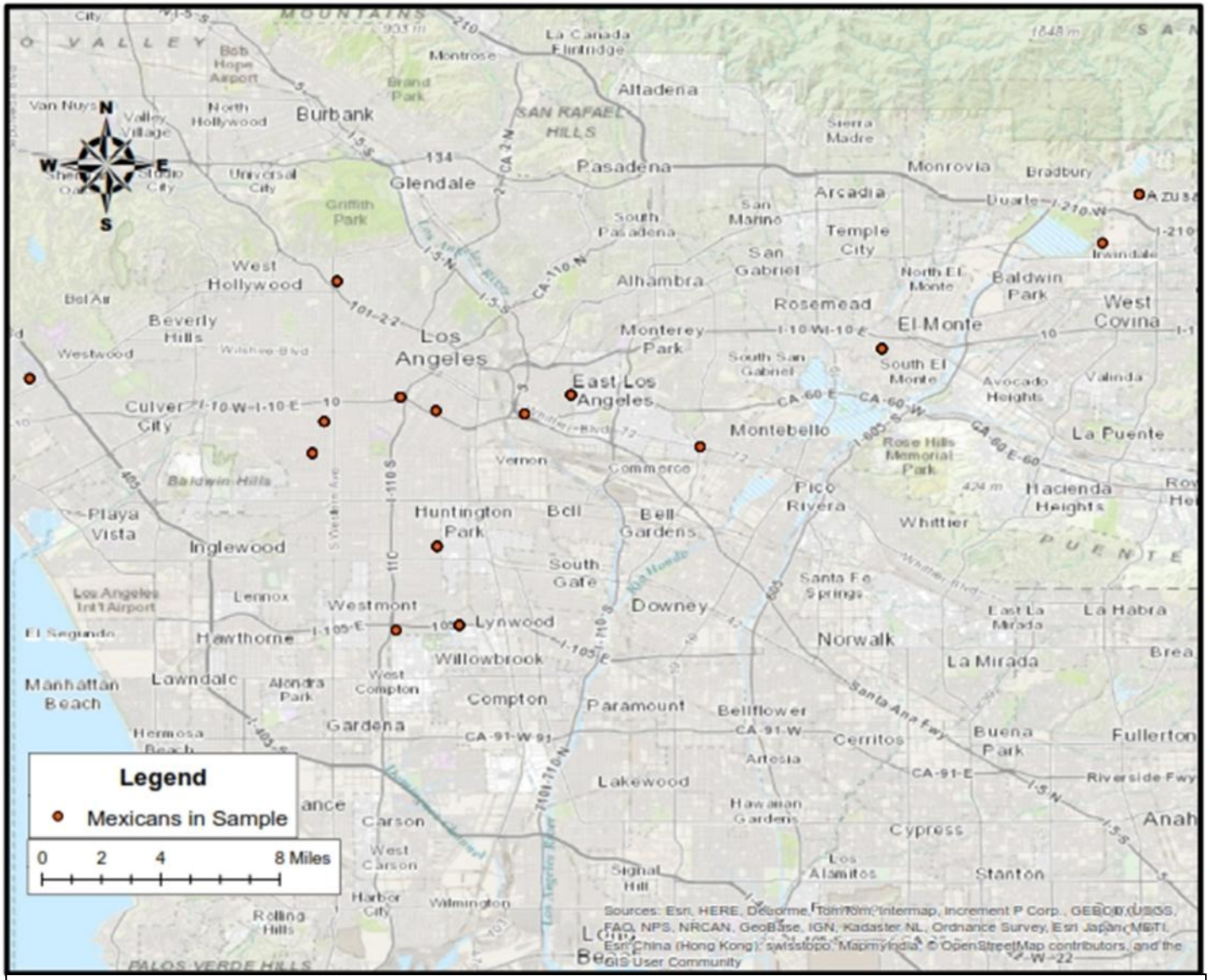
Table 2.5. Eight US States with the largest Mexican Population, 1930

State	Percentage	State	Percentage
Texas	50%	Oklahoma	2.8%
California	29%	Illinois	1.3%
Arizona	7.8%	Michigan	1%
New Mexico	4.0%		

Source: Daniel Morales, sample of Mexican population in the US, from US population census, 1930

Circular Flow: Return Migration from the United States in the Early 1900s" (Ph.D., University of Colorado at Boulder, 2014).

In the US, while Texas is still home to the largest concentration of people in the sample, various trends are worth noting. California's share of the Mexican sample population increased from 17% to 29%, while Arizona's share decreased. The Mexicans in Kansas, Colorado, Iowa and Louisiana completely disappear; none are living in those states ten years later. Oklahoma also loses most of the Mexicans in the sample, Kansas City has some who have moved there, while several start to appear in Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois. These trends make sense given the nature of the changes in industry. The Mexicans in Kansas, Missouri, Colorado, Iowa and Oklahoma were mostly single men working for the railroad and related industries. They were the most mobile of workers. Those in Louisiana were recruited by farmers to replace African-American labor that was going north, but they were unsuccessful in keeping Mexican labor over time.



Map 2.7. Los Angeles County, 1930. By 1930 the overwhelming majority of people has moved, those in rural and railroad areas were mostly gone, while those in urban centers such as Los Angeles were much more stable. Yet even here, the majority of people present in 1920 were not living there by 1930.

Location of Mexican Sample in Los Angeles 1930. By author, using ArcMap GIS.

With regard to locational mobility among families, the majority of those who were found again stayed in the same general area, with more than a third living in the exact same place. Only a fifth had changed states, however among those who had moved, the majority had moved to California, Texas and the Midwest. The most common move was from Arizona to California followed by Texas to California. This is in keeping with the general trends in the literature that show California's proportion of the Mexican population rising quickly in the 1920s, this appears to show that this was not only new migration from Mexico but people who had been in other parts of the US moving to California.

Table 2.6. Locational mobility among Heads of Household, 1930

Same Area	Moved in State	Changed State
42.3%	36.8%	21%

Source: Daniel Morales, sample of Mexican population in the US, from US population census, 1930

Table 2.7. Top Places to Move among Mexican Migrants, 1930, #'s of Families

California	Texas	Midwest	West
21	5	6	2

Source: Daniel Morales, sample of Mexican population in the US, from US population census, 1930

In 1930 Mexico conducted its first census since the end of the Revolution. Its previous census in 1921 was extremely unreliable because of the disorder in the countryside and the weak state of the central government at the time. As of 2016, the 1930 census is the only Mexican census available for public use that is searchable for individuals. It is thus a unique source in Mexican historical studies.

One hundred twenty-two people belonging to 35 distinct families who appeared in the sample group in 1920 were positively identified as living in Mexico in 1930. This is not a large number of people, but some two hundred more from the 1920 sample were identified who were

men whose name and age was the same as other men in Mexico but could not be positively identified by collaborating data. Nevertheless, the simple fact remains that very few people from the 1920 sample could be positively identified in the 1930 Mexican Census. This is not completely surprising, because the major repatriations had not started by the time of the 1930 census began and single men which make up such a large percentage of the total in 1920 are nearly impossible to find in any census sample because of the lack of detailed information. As stated above, more than two thirds of the entire 1920 sample group does not appear again in government records in either the United States or Mexico.

The limited sample of individuals and families that could be positively identified again in 1930 in Mexico gives us less data to work than the US sample. However, several trends are worth noting. A small majority of migrants were in central Mexico, with almost as many living in northern Mexican states, and with Chihuahua and Sonora having the most families overall. The second notable trend is the disproportionate number of men and families that were living in Arizona and were found in Mexico in 1930. This is not surprising giving the more mobile nature of mining and railroad work that prevailed in Arizona which will be discussed in chapter four. More surprising is how few people from Texas could be identified again in Mexico. Although the Texas migrant population was less mobile than that of other states, it is still does not explain the disparity. It is possible that those in Texas were more likely to migrate within the US but it is not possible to verify this with so few data points.

Table 2.8. Locations of Migrants in Mexico in 1930 compared to 1920

	Northern States	Central States	Southern States
Arizona	8	10	3
California	2	3	
Colorado	2	1	
Kansas		2	
Texas	2	2	

Source: Daniel Morales, sample of Mexican population in the US, from US population census, 1930

What does the Mexican Migrant Sample Population look like in 1930?

With the bulk of migrant working men not identifiable; the 1930 sample weighs heavily towards those who have families, those who are settled, and those who are of the middle class. In other words, the known biases of Census assert themselves very powerfully in both the US census and the Mexican Census. The way the Census gathered information favored these demographic groups over migrant workers, the poor, and single men.

This bias was strongest in the US sample, where almost the entire sample were living in single family dwellings. Likewise, nearly the entire population of single migrant men is gone, with only 180 heads of household accounting for the 958 individuals found again, with an average of six family members in each household. The gender gap does not exist with the 1930 group, there is almost exactly as many women as there are men in the Mexican sample group. Given that these are people who have been at least ten years in the United States, and almost all are part of families that are living in the US, and on average their time was closer to twenty years by 1930, it is not surprising that they are better educated than the cohort was in 1920. 79% of those in the sample could read and write, while 64% of people could speak English.

Most of the migrants who were in the 1930 Mexican census had families, on average each family was 3.5 persons, which is smaller than the large settled families found on the US side. This is not surprising given the fact that these were often single men in the US ten years previously and were usually younger than those who stayed in the US. Like the US sample, it was about equal in gender composition overall. Part of this can be attributed to the way women kept their maiden name upon marriage, making it possible to find a much higher percentage of women in Mexico than in the US.

How is the Sample Population doing economically?

In the US, it seems at first glance that the families are doing well, most have families and have settled into set occupations, both blue and white collar. This however should not be taken as a reflection of acculturation among the Mexican migration population as a whole. Such a conclusion is wrong. While that data first appears to shows that people, and especially families, were assimilating and becoming settled in urban centers, the data below is actually the result of selection bias, and the particular role that established families played in Mexican migrant communities. Eighteen families, or one in ten, took in boarders, some even took in many boarders. Some of these families were operating boarding houses as others were taking in a person or two as a source of extra income. This form was especially common among families headed by women. This was part of a larger strategy used by migrant families of all types of creating multiple income (and goods) streams in order to insure against the uncertainty of the market, especially in the agriculture industries. Among those with white collar occupation the most common occupation was those of clerk, small business owner, and grocer.

Table 2.9. Six Largest Industries/Types of Labor performed by Population, 1930

Industry	% of Working Pop	Industry	% of Working Pop
Agriculture	30%	Private Households	4%
Industry/Manufacturing	17%	Mining	4.4%
Grocery/Stores	7%	Other	37.6%

Source: Daniel Morales, sample of Mexican population in the US, from US population census, 1930

Table 2.10. Skill Level among Mexican Workers, 1930

Unskilled	41%	White Collar	15.5%
Semi-Skilled	26.4%	Professional	5%
Skilled	12%		

Source: Daniel Morales, sample of Mexican population in the US, from US population census, 1930

On employment and economic mobility, it at first appears as if there is some mobility into higher wage occupations and away from unskilled labor in basic industries like railroads, where only 2.3% of workers held jobs, and agriculture, which fell to 41%. While this was the case for some workers, it appears that this was primarily the result of selection bias. It was very difficult to find 1920 sample people in railroad, agriculture, and other types of general laborers again in Census or really any government records. These workers tended to be in industries with volatile employment, industries dependent on migrant labor. While it is not a surprise that they were not in the same place as they were ten years earlier, it is telling that for the most part they don't appear *anywhere* in the 1930 US census or other government registry.

An important exception to many of these trends is agricultural workers in Texas, and tenant farmers in particular. A total of 31 families in the sample, representing 195 individuals, fell into this group, almost a fifth of the entire 1930 sample. They were tenant farmers, ranch workers, or agricultural workers and their trajectory was distinct. Unlike other agricultural workers, where migration and mobility from place to place was a central characteristic, almost all of them were living in the same place in 1930 as in 1920. If they did move it was within the

same city or county rather than far away like most of the sample. They also showed the lowest occupational mobility of any group, with only two heads of family holding a better occupation than they were in 1920. The same was true of their children, there most of the second generation were also agricultural workers, and some also becoming tenant farmers. Together this group represents the largest single socio-economic block within the 1930 sample. That said, it must also be noted that most people who were agricultural workers in Texas in 1920 are either not found at all, or living somewhere other than Texas in 1930, especially single men without families.

With regard to mobility among the people found again in the 1930 census, some other patterns emerge. While there were more skilled and white collar occupations as a proportion of the 1930 sample, unskilled agriculture workers were still the largest single block of people. However, most of these were not unskilled migratory workers but rather tenant farmers who remained year after year in a single location even though one third of agricultural laborers were migratory workers. Of those who has changed jobs since 1920 most also changed industries. And while most of those who changed jobs moved up to higher skilled or better paid positions, those who stayed in the same industry did so at a slightly higher rate. Of those that did move up into higher skilled work, the largest was in moving from unskilled to semi-skilled occupations with eight people moving to skilled positions.

Table 2.11. 1930 Occupational Mobility among those who had Occupations in 1920

	Same Occupation Same Industry	Different Occupation Same Industry	Different Occupation and Industry
	59%	16%	25%
Among those who changed occupation, what percentage had better occupation?	N/A	74%	62%

Source: Daniel Morales, sample of Mexican population in the US, from US population census, 1930

Table 2.12. 1930 Occupational Skill Outcomes from Occupational Skill in 1920

1920	Unskilled 1930	Semi-Skilled 1930	Skilled 1930	White Collar 1930	Professional 1930
Unskilled: 89	56	17	8	3	0
Semi-Skilled: 15	0	12	1	2	0
Skilled: 26	0	0	24	2	0
White Collar: 24	0	0	2	21	1
Professional: 1	0	0	0	0	1

Source: Daniel Morales, sample of Mexican population in the US, from US population census, 1930

Turning to those who went back to Mexico, at least in economic terms a direct comparison to the US Census is not easy because of the differences in the ways jobs were categorized in Mexico compared to the United States. There were fewer job categories in Mexico with many under the name “jornalero” or “jornalero del campo” that could be distinct occupations in the US Census. However, some basic characteristics are visible. While the agricultural sector is well represented, it is a much smaller factor than it is for the Mexican population as a whole or even the migrant population in the US. A very high proportion of the workers who went to the US were engaged in non-agricultural labor when they returned to Mexico, and few were working in the railroad and mining industries. Many were skilled tradesmen like shoemakers, carpenters, or general laborers. Once a person did such a job in the US, they were unlikely to go back to the fields in Mexico; indeed, they often established their

own business when they returned. One common laborer in the US even remade himself as a businessman in Mexico.[25] About half of returned migrants were working in unskilled jobs but more than 43% were either skilled or semi-skilled workers. Likewise, Ward's census study indicates that there were no major differences in skills and human capital between those who returned to Mexico and those who stayed in the U.S.[26]

Table 2.13. Six Largest Industries/Types of Labor performed by Population, 1930

Industry	% of Working Pop	Industry	% of Working Pop
Agriculture	27%	Mining	4%
Industry/Manufacturing	40%	White Collar	4%
Services	15%	Railroad	2%

Source: Daniel Morales, sample of Mexican population in the US, from US population census, 1930

Table 2.14. Skill Level among Mexican Workers, 1930

Unskilled	50%	White Collar	3.3%
Semi-Skilled	13.3%	Professional	3.3%
Skilled	30%		

Source: Daniel Morales, sample of Mexican population in the US, from US population census, 1930

Occupational mobility among the Mexican migrants in Mexico in 1930 is more difficult to measure. A lot of the people did not have jobs lined up that were directly comparable between 1920 and 1930, either because they were too young or they were women who did not work in Mexico or the US, or they did not have an occupation in Mexico. The result was that only twenty people had jobs in both in 1920 and 1930, giving a sample size too small to be statistically reliable. That said, of those twenty their data is presented in tables above. There were comparability few people who had the same job in 1930 that they had in 1920, 66% had changed occupation, the most single common change was from a specific unskilled labor job in the US to

[25] As per rules for using the University of Minnesota IPUMS Census Data, I am refraining from using individual's names in this census study. Original census data can be made available upon request.

[26] Zachary A. Ward, "The Circular Flow: Return Migration from the United States in the Early 1900s" (Ph.D., University of Colorado at Boulder, 2014).

a farmer in Mexico, even if a higher proportion stayed outside agriculture than would be expected. Likewise, there are no clear trends in occupational mobility among skill levels other than that most people don't change the skill level of their occupation even if they change occupation and industry.

Table 2.15. 1930 Occupational Mobility in Mexico among those who had Occupations in 1920

	Same Occupation Same Industry	Different Occupation same Industry	Different Occupation and Industry
	33%	11%	55%
Among those who changed occupation, what percentage had better occupation?	N/A	100%	50%

Source: Daniel Morales, sample of Mexican population in the US, from US population census, 1930

Table 2.16. 1930 Occupational Skill Outcomes in Mexico from 1920 Occupational Skill in the US

1920	Unskilled 1930	Semi-Skilled 1930	Skilled 1930	White Collar 1930	Professional 1930
Unskilled: 8	6	1	0	0	1
Semi-Skilled: 3	1	1	1	0	0
Skilled: 7	1	0	5	1	0
White Collar: 2	0	2	0	0	0
Professional: 0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Daniel Morales, sample of Mexican population in the US, from US population census, 1930

There are always individual examples that defy the trends, like the laborer turned businessman that was mentioned earlier. There was also an automobile mechanic that was a white collar employee of the Mexican federal government ten years later, two boarding house operators in the US who returned to Mexico, to own land, and a low skilled railroad worker in the US who became a skilled railway worker in Mexico ten years later. There are also individuals who appear to have experienced downward mobility. However, the sample size was simply too small to derive any general trends these outcomes.

How did the Second Generation fare?

Overall there was little occupational mobility between generations observed before the Great Depression. Occupations tended to run in the family: people worked in many of the same industries as other family members and they also tended to pass jobs to their children. The table below shows the correlation between the job of the parent and their children over time. The overwhelming majority of the second generation did the same level of work as their parents at least in the first years of their adult lives in the US. While most of this generation is Mexican-American (that is, born in the US), a significant portion came to the US as children. There are exceptions to this rule, especially when you compare to the small sample of second generation people in Mexico. Children having jobs that are more than a single skill level removed from their parents is rare, though it did happen, especially those going into white collar occupations like clerks, salesman, and secretaries. The bulk of clerk positions held by the second generation are actually grocery or other store positions. In other words, small family run businesses account for the bulk of Mexican white collar work in the sample. Meanwhile for those who went back to Mexico no clear pattern emerged because of the very small sample size as shown in second table below. More women are represented because of the increased ability to track them, though most were housewives by 1930. Like in the US, children tended to have the same job as their fathers.

Table 2.17. 1930 Occupations of Children in US from Occupation of Parent in 1920 US

Parent 1920	Unskilled 1930	Semi-Skilled 1930	Skilled 1930	White Collar 1930	Professional 1930
Unskilled: 96	62	18	10	6	0
Semi-Skilled: 14	2	7	2	3	0
Skilled: 23	2	3	7	11	0
White Collar: 22	1	3	3	15	0
Professional: 0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Daniel Morales, sample of Mexican population in the US, from US population census, 1930

Table 2.18. 1930 Occupations of Children in Mexico from Occupation of Parent in 1920

Parent 1920	Unskilled 1930	Semi-Skilled 1930	Skilled 1930	White Collar 1930	Professional 1930
Unskilled: 10	10	0	0	0	0
Semi-Skilled: 1	0	1	0	0	0
Skilled: 6	2	0	4	0	0
White Collar: 2	0	2	0	0	0
Professional: 0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Daniel Morales, sample of Mexican population in the US, from US population census, 1930

The Economy of Migrant Labor

Several factors account for the divergences among the people in the data. As I have already mentioned, those who showed up again in the Census were primarily those who were settled, had families, and had better jobs than the bulk of migrants who were laborers, did not have stable jobs or families with them. Among those who were found again, there was a large difference among those who stayed in one spot and those who had migrated (back to Mexico or to another region in the US) since 1920. The most statistically significant variable was whether people owned property or not, renters were twice as likely to move than owners. This was followed by age, where younger people were more likely to stay in one place than older ones. This is mostly due to second generation Mexican-Americans, they lived with stable families and stayed within the same communities as they grew into young adulthood. These different paths, those who migrated and those who were settled were not divergent or separate phenomena.

Those who settled were integrated into the growing Mexican-American communities, especially in urban centers. They primarily lived within Mexican enclaves in urban and rural centers, their jobs were to a significant extent dependent on the larger migrant population-boarding house owners, small business men and women, clerks, grocery store proprietors,

newspaper/press workers and teachers. Their economic stability in large part depended on their position *within* immigrant communities, where they were a key constituency that also included middle-class newspaper writers, those who participated in civic life in *mutalistas*, church organizations, and labor unions that I will discuss in the next chapter. People could and did move between these two groups, settlers and migrants, and many who planned to stay in the US only a short time did act more like settlers as time went on. Among the migrants in the sample, most of those who were stable had stable jobs and families, and most of them had these had both of these things in 1920 as well. Throughout the 1920s more and more migrants brought families, but at least in the cohort, those who were most stable came with families initially or at least before 1920.

Socioeconomic mobility was extremely limited within the national cohort, and even the local Chicago cohort. Only the middle class settlers had some form of economic mobility to better occupations, not those that moved or farmers in Texas that stayed. Intergenerational mobility likewise was limited to this group. This reflects the low skill level, migratory nature of most of the work Mexicans in the United States did, especially those who worked directly in the fields, which experienced the least mobility. The lack of movement over the decade also suggests that most Mexican migrants were participating in a segmented labor market. Labor scholars have argued for the existence of a separate labor market for migrants, one where migrants work in a different set of jobs with their own logics, apart from the native work force.[27] Mexican migrants in the national cohort seem to be following this pattern, locked into low wage agricultural,

[27] Edward E. Telles and Vilma Ortiz, *Generations of Exclusion: Mexican Americans, Assimilation, and Race* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation Publications, 2009); Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut, *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*, (Berkeley : New York: University of California Press, 2001); Ian M. McDonald and Robert M. Solow, "Wages and employment in a segmented labor market," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 100 (1985): 1115-1141.

railroad, and mining employment which were inherently unstable with long periods of unemployment and strong barriers to upward mobility. Seasonal unemployment was built into many of these jobs, as was a migratory life. Instead you see most people in the sample migrating, often back to Mexico, often within regional circuits. For these people, moving to other jobs was one of the few avenues open to improve their working conditions. More importantly, this pattern also suggests that for many of these migrants, permanent settlement was not an option that was open to them, whether they wanted to or not. Instead they primarily worked in occupations that required them to be migrant laborers, moving between jobs and locations depending on the business and seasonal cycles.

It is not possible within the confines of the national study to know whether people wanted to permanently settle or not, but the ways in which permanent settlement was not an option for the majority of Mexican migrants in the US is quite clear. However, qualitative evidence that I present in later chapters shows the ways in which many (but certainly not all) Mexican migrants saw their migration to the United States as a way to improve their lives in Mexico rather than in the US, suggesting that permanent settlement was the not the goal for many if not most migrants, even as it was denied to those who did desire to stay. It is with this that I turn to the local cohort study in Chicago.

The Chicago Census Study

In addition to the main quantitative study discussed above, I undertook a smaller version of the census cohort study of Mexicans who were living in Chicago in 1920. The purpose of this study was to examine economic and spatial mobility within Chicago's Mexican communities,

however the main result of the study was the extent to which Chicago was just one place among many that migrants live in as they traveled. Like the national cohort sample, the study I undertook was of individuals and their families, which allowed me to get information which could not be gathered though studies of institutions and communities. I used the 1920 and 1930 census to create a sample of Mexican immigrants. The results were very similar to the national study, but showed even more heavily the migratory nature of most Mexican migrant's lives before the Great Depression. While other cities, Los Angeles and San Antonio in particular had more settled populations and tended to have higher rates of families, Chicago like many new areas where Mexicans were spreading, is an extreme example of Mexican labor migration as an ongoing process.

By 1920, Chicago was home to many industries but three in particular stood out: railroads, meat packing and steel. These industries accounted for the bulk of the manufacturing jobs in the area, most of which were manned by migrant labor. Each of these industries hired tens of thousands of workers in Chicago and made up the three industries which actively recruited Mexicans in the years after World War I. Each industry had a corresponding neighborhood in Chicago where most of their non-African-American workers lived. This meant that when Mexicans came to Chicago to work for one of these industries, they would likely settle in its accompanying neighborhood. These included the Back of the Yards, and South Chicago, the largest neighborhood, the Near West Side, however did not have a dominant industry but instead had people working in several dozen different places. The largest concentrations of Mexican residency in Chicago were in precisely these areas [see maps 7 & 8].

The big three (railroads, meat packing, and steel) disproportionately show up on the 1920 census as the main employers of Mexicans in Chicago. The numbers below show that the big

three make up a little less than half of all the industries where Mexicans were working during the 1920s, but influenced the migrant economy in ways more important than their numbers. Through recruitment of large numbers of migrant workers in southern cities and bringing in new workers year after year, they determined where Mexicans lived, and usually made up the entry industries for new immigrants. These companies' employees made up the backbone of their communities, earning more than employees of other industries and supporting many other workers through spending in everything from food to entertainment. Each of these industries' hiring and importation of Mexican migrant workers led to the establishment of a Mexican neighborhood in the area around the factory/railyards. In some cases these were purpose built worker housing such as at Inland Steel though most of its workforce lived in South Chicago, but in most cases there was no formal planning. The big three industries were followed by hotel, and auto industries in importance to Mexican Chicago.

Table 2.19. Largest Industries Employing Mexican Immigrants in 1920

Railroads	122	Telephone/Electric	7
Stock Yards	60	Office	7
Steel Mills	28	Private Employer	6
Packing	20	Candy Industry	5
Hotel	18	Church	5
"Factory"	15	"Rand House"	5
Auto Industry	13	Unknown Industry	24
Restaurant	11	Other Industry	95
Education/ City	11	Other	60
Music/Theater	9		

From 1920 Census, available at Heritage Quest, http://www.heritagequestonline.com/prod/genealogy/index

It was not surprising that railroads hired more than twice the number of Mexican workers as the next largest industry in the table above. Railroads acted as a gateway industry for

Mexicans before they moved on to other types of work, as will be discussed in chapter 4.[28] The benefits of free transport with the agreement that they would work for at least six months and cheap shelter (box cars) made it especially attractive to single young men who made up the bulk of railroad workers. A large number of Mexicans were observed living in boxcars alongside other railroad workers, though with one exception these tended to be men-only housing conditions.[29] Many of the railroad workers stayed temporarily in Chicago or moved on to other industries as soon as they could; the vast majority are not found in the 1930 Census.

The occupations that these Mexican immigrants took on arrival in Chicago were similar to those other low-skilled industrial workers took. Workers are divided into five general categories: unskilled, semi-skilled, skilled, white collar, and professional.[30] Not surprisingly, the largest group in the sample were unskilled workers at 56%, followed by semi-skilled at 14%, skilled at 14%; together blue collar workers made up about 84% of the type of work Mexicans in Chicago performed. White collar workers made up 7%, professionals made up 3% and other made up 5% respectively.[31] Most importantly however, the vast majority of laborers had been several years in the United States, even if their arrival in Chicago was much more recent. In

[28] Zaragosa Vargas, "Armies in the Fields and Factories: The Mexican Working Classes in the Midwest in the 1920s," *Mexican Studies-Estudios Mexicanos* 7 (1991): 47-71. Jorge Hernandez Fujigaki, “Mexican Steelworkers and the United Steelworkers of America in the Midwest: The Inland Steel Experience 1936-1976” (PhD Diss., University of Chicago, 1991).

[29] Anita Jones, “Conditions surrounding Mexicans in Chicago” (MA Thesis, University of Chicago, 1928)

[30] Joseph P. Ferrie, *Yankeys Now Immigrants in the Antebellum United States 1840-1860* (Oxford University Press, 1999) And. Thomas Kessner, *The Golden Door: Italian and Jewish Immigrant Mobility in New York City, 1880-1915*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977)

[31] Within each group I placed a variety of occupations depending on the type of work a person would do. Laborers, helpers, and “hands” were placed into the unskilled category, while machine operators, waiters, cutters etc. were placed in the semi-skilled category. Electricians, butchers, carpenters, etc. were placed in the skilled category. Clerks, teachers, government workers, etc. were placed in the white collar category. Doctors, engineers, lawyers, business owners were placed in the professional category.

other words, most migrants had spent time in other places in the United States before coming to Chicago, with even unskilled workers averaging 4.4 years since their first entrance into the country. Table 2.20 below breaks down the results along job description and the other along skill type.

Table 2.20. Skill Type Compared to Other Factors in the Mexican Sample Population in 1920

	Unskilled	Semi-Skilled	Skilled	White-Collar	Professional
Total size	292	75	74	35	17
Avg Age	29.6	28.0	31.2	29.2	30.4
Family size	1.96	1.93	2.2	2.3	2.2
Time in US In yrs	4.4	7	9.4	8	10.25

From 1920 Census, available at Heritage Quest, http://www.heritagequestonline.com/prod/genealogy/index

About 42% of all workers were unskilled laborers, which was more than ten times larger than the next largest category. The top four spots however make up the largest categories in their respective skill type: laborer for unskilled, mechanic for skilled, clerk for white-collar, and section-laborer for semi-skilled. When matched against the older, more experienced, and more white-collar workforce of the city as a whole, the difference becomes apparent. The Mexican immigrant population in 1920 was dominated by young unskilled workers brought over by heavy industries to secure a cheap labor force in a time of labor tensions. The two tables below show a breakdown of the specific job descriptions of the sample Mexican Migrant population and the city of Chicago as a whole.

Table 2.21 Job Descriptions for Mexican Immigrants in 1920

Laborer	224	House-cleaner	8
Mechanic	20	Butcher	7
Clerk	14	Unknown	13
Section-Laborer	11	Other	159
Waiter	10	Unemployed	46
painter	9		

From 1920 Census, available at Heritage Quest, http://www.heritagequestonline.com/prod/genealogy/index

Table 2.22 Job Descriptions for the City of Chicago in 1920

Laborer	79,000	Chauffer	17,000
Clerk	70,000	Tailor	17,000
Retail Dealer	41,000	Shoemaker	16,000
Salesman	40,000	Stockyard[32]	16,000
Mechanic	36,000		

Ernest W. Burgess and Charles Newcomb, Edit, *Census Data of the City of Chicago 1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931)

Age did not matter much in determining what type of job a person had in 1920. The Mexican population was relatively young throughout the entire sample, though small changes did show up by skill type (Table 2.20). Skill and job type also did not have a major effect on family size, with more highly skilled workers only having marginally larger families than those on the lower end of the scale. The single largest difference among Mexican immigrants that correlated with the type of work a person did was the time spent in America. Unskilled workers on average had spent less than half as much time in America as the skilled workers (see table 2.20). There was a limit to upwards mobility among Mexican migrant workers. Those who started as manual laborers did not become white-collar workers. The white collar work force was

[32] No description of job was provided.

dominated by young men, sometimes with parents who were professionals and had come to America at a young age. A laborer could become a craftsman but probably not a clerk or manager; a similar trend shows up among the small second generation in 1930 (see Table 2.28 below).

Compared to the rest of Chicago and even the national census study, the Mexican sample population was young, male, and single. The sex ratio of the Mexican population was 316:100, while those of other immigrant groups was 115:100 in Cook county.[33] That in 1920 Chicago's Mexican population was single was clear enough; over half of the census sample consisted of single men. Single women however were fairly rare, among immigrants, a woman over 15 was twice as likely to be married than a man the same age.[34] The Mexican marriage rate was far lower than comparable groups; European immigrant marriage rates were almost twice as high (see Table 2.23). When one considers the number of men that did not have wives with them, the proportion increases to almost two thirds. These men were generally young, but not teenagers or those just entering adulthood, most were in their twenties and early thirties, with a sprinkle of older and younger men. This community was young for another reason: the vast majority had come to the US less than 7 years before. The average Mexican immigrant in 1920 was 23 and nine months old, had arrived sometime in 1915, and was not married. Compared to European immigrants, who were in general older, 40.5% came before 1900 and 45.4% between 1900 and

[33] Ernest W. Burgess and Charles Newcomb, Edit, Census Data of the City of Chicago 1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931)

[34] Ernest W. Burgess and Charles Newcomb, Edit, *Census Data of the City of Chicago 1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), pg 13

1913.[35] However it is possible the low marriage rate is attributable to fewer spouses being in Chicago rather than that the migrants were never married.

Table 2.23. Marriage rates in Chicago among Different Groups in 1920 (population over 15yrs old)

	Native White	European Immigrant	African-American	Mexican
Marriage %	58%	70%	59%	34%-47%

Ernest W. Burgess and Charles Newcomb, Edit, *Census Data of the City of Chicago 1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931); From 1920 Census, available at Heritage Quest,

For the most part Mexican families in Chicago in the 1920s lived in traditional single family housing. However, most migrants lived with others who may or not be related. This reflects the large amount of apartments, boarding houses and families that took in boarders in the crowded city. Most of the young boarders lived together rather than being scattered around the neighborhood, although it was not uncommon for them to live with European immigrants.[36] Aside from those that lived in apartments there was a substantial population that was living in railroad boxcars. These people were found along the south branch of the Chicago River and west of the South Chicago neighborhood (see Map 8). While most of the Mexicans who lived in these train cars were single, there were also some families living in them. This finding is consistent with those of sociological researchers from the University of Chicago at the time.[37] Overall**,** the men and women who came to Chicago during this time found housing where it was closest to

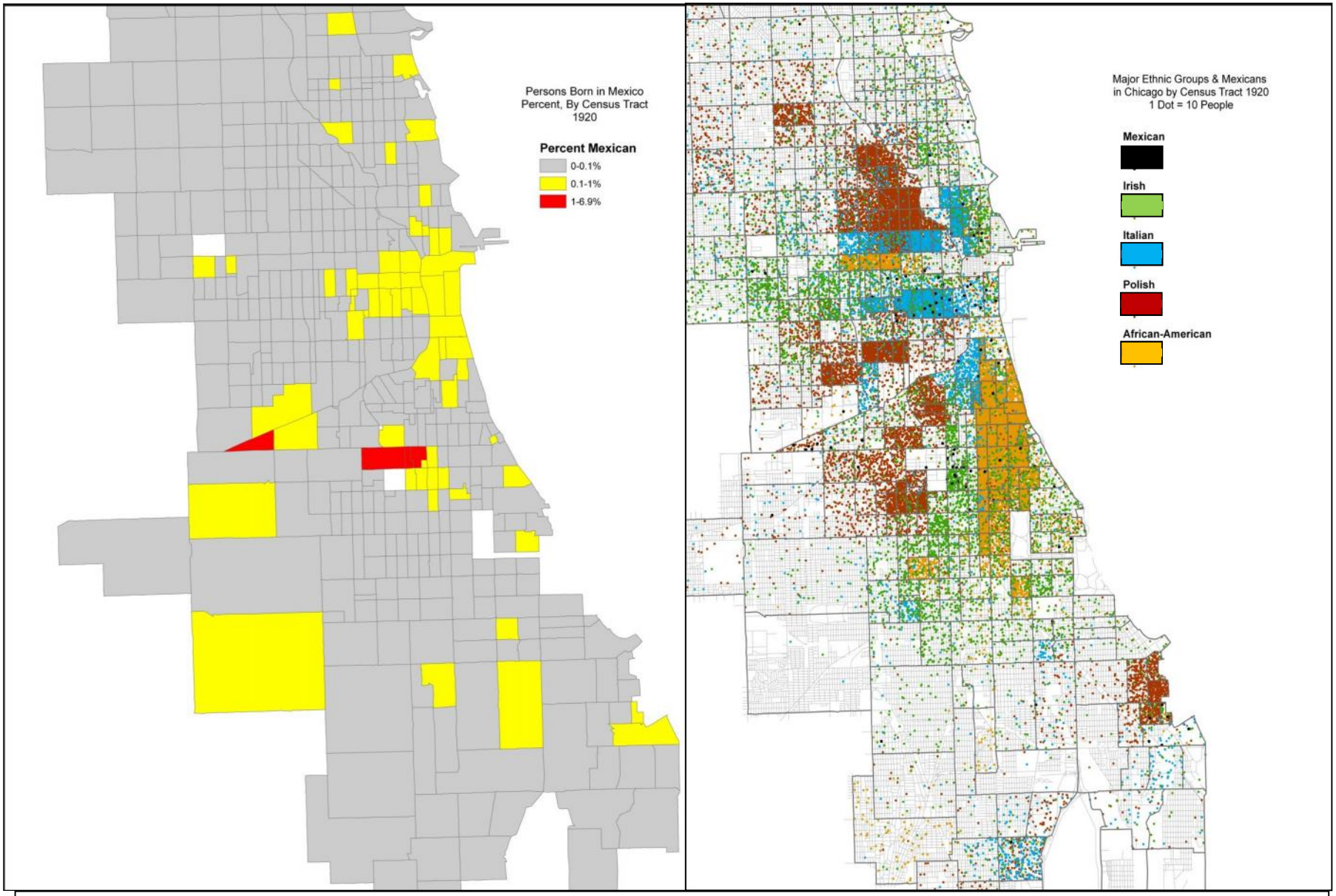
[35] Ernest W. Burgess and Charles Newcomb, Edit, *Census Data of the City of Chicago 1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), pg 23

[36] A direct comparison in rates of boarders could not be made with European immigrants and African Americans because the census reports measured different criteria that negated the difference between apartments and houses; the definition of a housing unit was also unclear.

[37] Anita Jones, "Conditions surrounding Mexicans in Chicago" (MA Thesis, University of Chicago, 1928), Ch. 5.

their work and wherever it was available. Working for railroads often meant living in train cars without adequate heating, ventilation, or sewage disposal systems, though railroad companies often provided toilet and washing facilities. For those working nearer to Chicago's center this meant that they lived with other men in crowded housing in other immigrant neighborhoods. It is likely that many of these men were sending a large part of their earning home or were preparing to leave the area.

Mexican families fared better than singles. While accounting for only a third of the men found in 1920 they doubled the size of the sample. The average family had three individuals, a father, a mother and a young child, although some households had upwards of ten. Most families rented apartments, while more prosperous families rented or owned homes. The largest clusters of immigrants tended to live in the Near West Side, in the Back of the Yards and in South Chicago (See Map 8). Families tended to live in areas similar to the areas young men lived in, but tended to rent their own housing rather than live with other families or boarders.



2.8 & 2.9. These maps show the Mexican population as percent and as a dot map. The different communities are clearly identifiable and so is the still mixed Black Belt of 1920. [Information from the University of Wisconsin Census Track Data for 1920]

Chicago Sample Population 1930

The ability to measure the economic and residential mobility of immigrants is critical in understanding their experience. Yet tracking occupational mobility and spatial mobility has always been hard, especially for a group that more often than not did not report their entrance at the border. For the most part, Mexican migrants did not have occupational mobility within the same space. Instead, it is best to understand that migration from one place to another was critical to occupational mobility. Looking for better opportunities by moving, was a potential source of upward mobility that usually does not show up in location studies.[38]

Most of the 521 adult male Mexicans and the 931 individuals who were in Chicago in my 1920 Census sample were not found in the 1930 census. Only about one in five were positively identified again as living somewhere in the United States in 1930.[39] In total, I was able to find 101 male heads of households from the 1920 samples and a total of 270 people.[40] While a substantial number were probably lost due to inaccurate census data gathering, either in 1920 or in 1930, I believe most had moved out the country in those ten years. Many single men could also not be identified because their names were too common and it was impossible to single out which one of the possibilities it could be, unfortunately, as in the larger national cohort, this gave a statistically significant bias towards settled families in the information that is available. The

[38] Joseph P. Ferrie, *Yankeys Now Immigrants in the Antebellum United States 1840-1860* (Oxford University Press, 1999) Ch 5.

[39] This is partially due to archival mistakes at Ancestry, where names are often misspelled or miss-translated so that even the names are there, it is hard to find them in the electronic name database. Example: Brava Cresencio (Heritage) showed up as Ozava Cresenon and Brava Crenatis, these were fortunate enough to be close enough to the actual spelling for me to look at the paper scan, often they are not.

[40] The total number of Mexicans in Chicago in 1930 is 19,362, a major increase though still trailing African Americans at 233,903, followed by Polish at 149,622, Germans at 111,366, and Russians fell to 78,462. Ernest W. Burgess and Charles Newcomb, Edit, *Census Data of the City of Chicago 1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1933) pg X-XIII.

1930 census was taken before many of the major repatriation campaigns of the 1930s but after the depression had begun so it was not likely that they were deported so much as left voluntarily. The numbers for mobility were striking. Of the sample population who were found again about half were no longer in the Cook County area. Most had moved to places in the US as far as California and Texas. Families were disproportionably represented among those who were found and many former boarders were among those who created families. Those who were still in the city tended to be higher up the wage scale, rented their homes, and had families.

Even with a fairly biased sample group that was found in 1930, several trends are apparent. Most migrants no longer lived in Chicago, though some families still lived in the Midwest ten years later. Considering how heavily weighted the found sample is towards stable families, it is safe to assume most Mexicans moved away from the city in the intervening years. Of those that were found, several trends are worth noting. The first and most obvious is that Mexicans who stayed in Chicago had the most stable and largest families, at an average size of 5.23, while those in other parts of the Midwest had family sizes of 4.18. Migrants outside the Midwest were much more evenly divided between families and working men without families, with those in California averaging 2.61 persons per head of family. Likewise, it is worth nothing that only two Mexican families returned to Texas, even less than went to the east coast, but in both cases there were too few of them to draw out any useful patterns. Overall, almost all single males could not positively be identified again, and as often as not, were not in the rolls of the US Census at all. Table 2.24 breaks down the locations and family sizes of those who were found again in 1930.

Table 2.24 Locations and Family size of Mexicans Identified in 1930 Census

Chicago	Avg	Midwest	Avg	California	Avg	Texas	Avg	Eastern	Avg
Heads	Family Size	Heads	Family Size	Heads	Family Size	Heads	Family Size	Heads	Family Size
26	5.23	22	4.18	13	2.61	2	4.5	3	3

From 1920 Census, available at Heritage Quest, http://www.heritagequestonline.com/prod/genealogy/index

The industries of meat packing, steel and railroads were still the big three in 1930, but by a much smaller margin; they only made up thirty of the 101 males found, while teachers and artists make up a disproportionate amount of those found again. The largest job description in 1920 was laborer, but had fallen to a little over 30% of the work force from the 42% of 1920. This was expected as workers dropped out of the sample (those with less skill in 1920 were more likely to not be found in 1930). This contrasted sharply with the stability of the teacher population, which remained almost exactly the same as in 1920, which contributed to a rise in the percentage of the white collar population (see Table 2.27).

Table 2.25. Largest Industries Employing Mexican Immigrants in 1930

Railroads	20	Music/ Theater	7
Stockyards	4	Own Business	5
Steel Mills	7	Office	7
Education	5	Other	46

From 1920 Census, available at Heritage Quest, http://www.heritagequestonline.com/prod/genealogy/index

Table 2.26. Job Descriptions for Mexican Immigrants in 1930

Laborer	33	Painter	4
Salesman	6	Other	48
Teacher	5		
Owner/ Exec	5		

From 1920 Census, available at Heritage Quest, http://www.heritagequestonline.com/prod/genealogy/index

Table 2.27. Breakdown of Skill Type Compared to Other Factors in the Mexican Sample Population in 1930

	Unskilled	Semi-Skilled	Skilled	White-Collar	Professional
Total size	39	15	17	19	9
Avg Age	36.6	36.58	46	35.3	43.3
Family size	5.16	4	3.78	3.93	3.83
Time in US In yrs	16.24	17	22.58	18.7	26.2

From 1920 Census, available at Heritage Quest, http://www.heritagequestonline.com/prod/genealogy/index

Mexican immigrant occupational categories in 1930 were: 39% unskilled, 15% semi-skilled, 17% skilled, 19% white collar, 9% professional, and 2% other (see Table 2.27). Laborers make up the largest category but the next three largest were white collar occupations. This suggests that the largest residential mobility occurred in blue-collar occupations while some occupations such as teachers proved very stable (Table 2.26).[41] Most of the single men who worked unskilled jobs were not found in the 1930 census. While some of this was simple loss or error, it also suggests that many of these immigrants migrated back to Mexico or elsewhere in the US after some time. Some blue collar workers moved up in skill category, while others in the 1930 results were already in higher skill categories. Skilled and professional workers were the oldest and most experienced groups, both with over 20 years in the US on average (Table 2.27).[42] The biggest jump however was in the proportion of white collar workers. White collar workers were relatively young, which supports the notion that there was a glass ceiling for blue collar workers. White collar workers might become professionals and unskilled workers might

[41] Unfortunately accurate figures on jobs could not be recreated for the 1930 census for non-Mexican groups due to a change in the way employment figures were presented between the 1920 and 1930 reports.

[42] The City of Chicago in general became much older in these ten years. The demography charts became more of a 'tree' than a pyramid. The bulge started at 20years of age rather than at 10 and peaked at 44-50 years of age rather than the 25-30 of 1930. The population under 10 dropped from 10.08% to 7.56%. Ernest W. Burgess and Charles Newcomb, Edit, *Census Data of the City of Chicago 1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1933)

become skilled workers, but there seems to have been little crossover into each other's category; the blue and white collar worker separation remained strong in the census sample. While these may range from door-to-door salesmen to managers, most tended to be on the lower-paying end of the scale. It does not appear that the high number of white collar workers was due to upward mobility, but rather non-random sample selection. Almost all of the white collar workers in 1930 were white collar in 1920, meaning that these people above all others tended to stay and settle in one place. There were a handful of individuals who had moved up but not a significant number. It seems instead that the more skilled workers simply outlived others in the city.

The families of Mexican immigrants in 1930 were considerably larger than those in 1920, which was expected. Just as importantly, those family members were ten years older. In 1920 just about all the family members were too young to be part of the work force, which made it difficult to look at the second generation. That was not so with the 1930 sample, where a small but telling number of young men and women had entered the work force. The 1930 Census provides insight into how these men and women began their careers. For the most part, they entered into the same occupational level as their parents, though often below what their parent's had achieved. So that for the most part, blue collar workers begot blue collar workers and white collar workers begot white collar workers. That general pattern, however, did not apply to the children of highly skilled blue collar works who were found in both blue and white collar occupations. These young men and women worked in every field except Professional, which no young adult had reached. Skilled Mexicans seem in some instances to have been able to give their children a boost at the start of their careers which was not seen in unskilled or semi-skilled Mexicans as seen in the table below.

Table 2.28. Second Generation Mexican Skill Level at Start of Career in 1930

	Unskilled (Child)	Semi-Skilled (Child)	Skilled (Child)	White-Collar (Child)	Professional (Child)
Unskilled (Parent)	5	1	0	1	0
Semi-Skilled (Parent)	2	0	0	0	0
Skilled (Parent)	3	1	4	4	0
White-Collar (Parent)	0	0	1	4	0
Professional (Parent)	0	1	0	5	0

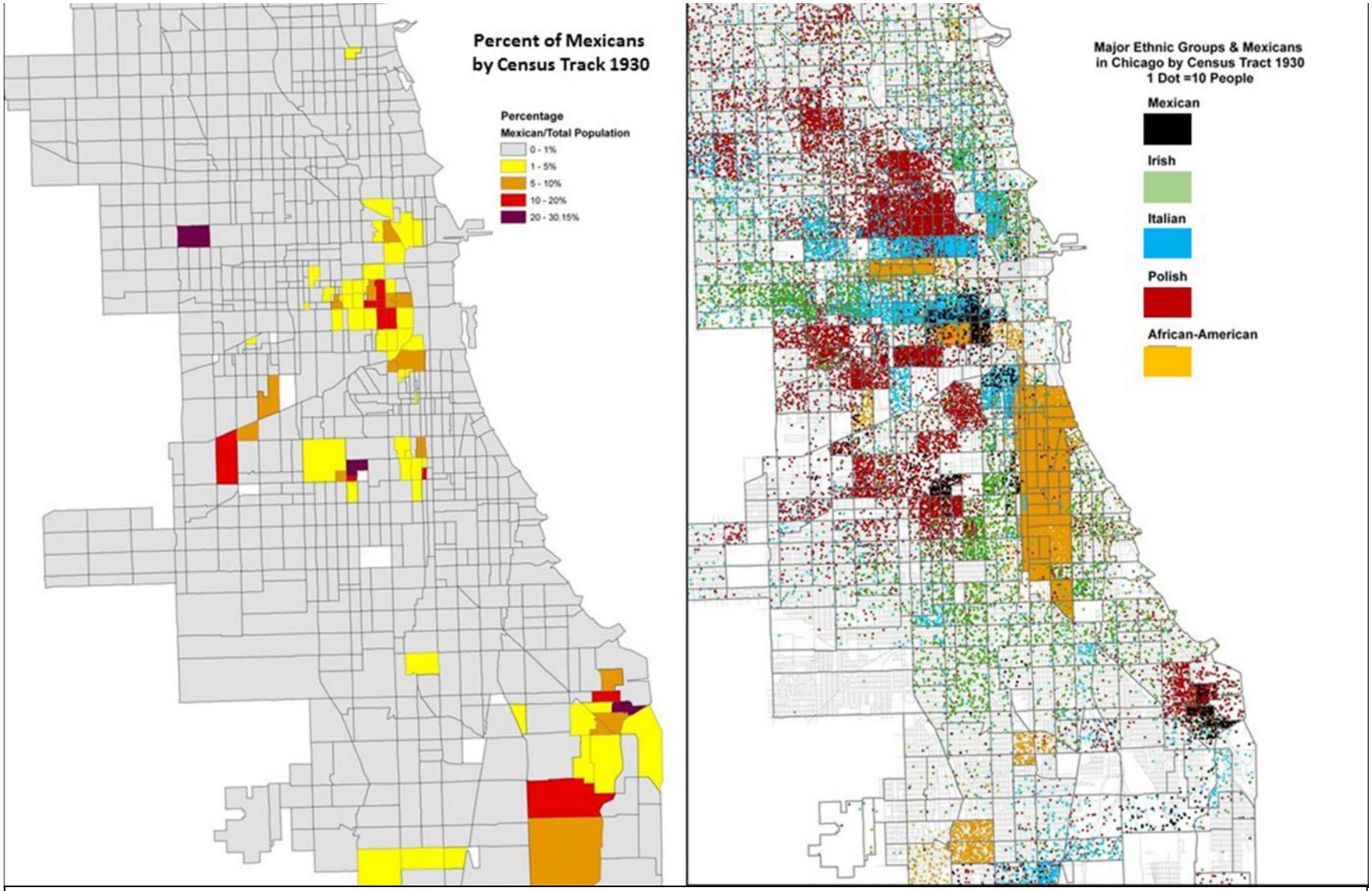
From 1920 Census, available at Heritage Quest, http://www.heritagequestonline.com/prod/genealogy/index

When looking at the particular case of Chicago it becomes clear that the city, while a major hub of jobs, for Mexicans was never independent of the railroad and beet industries. These provided the bulk of the migrants into the city, and often provided the jobs that took them away from the city, so that the overall size of the population was dependent on the amount of churning within these two industries. The migratory nature of most of Chicago's Mexican population can be seen by looking at the behavior of the migrants that came in the late 1910s, from 1917 to 1920, several thousand Mexicans arrived into the city to work in several industries. Almost all Mexicans in the city in this era were first generation, and almost all had spent several more years in the country than in the city, showing that they had worked in the United States before coming to Chicago. Most of those had spent at least some time on the railroads. Looking at their behavior over the next ten years shows that almost none stayed in the city, comparing their locations in the city from 1920 to 1930 (before the major repatriation programs started), shows this to be the case.

The constant turnover of workers in the US, seen in the census sample and in the Chicago study meant that with few workers staying more than a few years at a single location, only some could built the seniority necessary to move up the blue-collar economic ladder. This was clearly seen in the Chicago group, where almost all workers were recent arrivals at their location, and as a consequence, few moved up the economic ladder over ten years.

The scholarship on Mexicans in Chicago has tended to look upon the Mexicans in the 1920s through the lens of their subsequent history, and as such has concerned itself with the question of how the Mexican communities in the 1920s became the ones of today. [43] Historians have tended to write the histories of immigrant groups as histories of institutions and specific geographic communities. These arguments have been predicated on the assumption that changes in individuals can be seen in changes among their institutions, leading historians to miss a critical part of the immigrant experience. Mexican immigrants' experiences in the 1920s were as much shaped by mobility as they were by staying in a particular place. Without following individuals over time one misses this critical component and cannot fully explain immigration in the early twentieth century. It is helpful to think about a changing population of individuals whose lives were lived in communities yet whose fates were not tied to specific geographic neighborhoods and institutions. Movement back and forth between the city and Mexico was a major force in the lives of these Mexican immigrants and calls into question the idea of creating history based on stationary institutions.

[43] Gabriela F. Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity and Nation, 1916-39* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).



Map 2.10 & 2.11 By 1930 the Mexican communities in Chicago had grown in the Near West, the Back of the Yards and the Lake Calumet area. Mexicans in the near west side had also spilled over form Italian neighborhoods into African American neighborhoods. Also notice the now homogeneous and very dense black belt. [Information from the University of Wisconsin Census Track Data for 1930]

Acculturation and Migration

The two parts of the study, national and regional, primarily shows that the majority of Mexican migrants in the US in 1920 lived lives dominated by continuous migration. By 1930 most were not living anywhere close to where they had been ten years previously. This conclusion is based on the limitations of the study and the available evidence. This is my argument for what happened to the majority that were not found again, and it is even the primary outcome of those who were found again. There were two major exceptions to the general finding: tenant farmers and the middle class.

The families that were found again in the 1930 Census were those in industries or situations that tended not to have much turnover, such as tenant farmers, small proprietorships, or skilled labor. The result is that the US data offer a window into the world of those who settled (or were in the process of settling) permanently in the United States. They often had American born children, they tended to have permanent employment, even if most were still unskilled and semi-skilled workers. Both tenant farmers/sharecroppers/resident farm workers and the more middle class skilled and white collar workers I examine held positions within the world of industries that hired Mexican labor separate from that of the migratory laborers that make up the bulk of the population studied. They were often one step above that of farm workers, and railroad workers that make up the largest blocks of people within the cohort, yet their worlds were intimately tied. People did move from place to another, but less often than scholars might think, those who were more settled in 1930 were mostly those who were settled in 1920.

Those who did stay near their location tended to have the largest families, the most stable jobs, and an economic niche that either made leaving difficult or provided enough opportunity for them to stop moving. Some of the small farmers in the sample grew enough crops that by

1930 they owned the land that they farmed, but usually this was not the case; instead they usually owed a rent or mortgage on the land they farmed. This made leaving difficult for famers, especially if they had families to feed, which also suggests why the majority of their children also became cotton workers by 1930. Yet even here, in the most constant (or trapped) socio-economic situation many Mexicans found themselves in, the majority of Texas cotton workers in 1920 are not doing the exact same job ten years later. The next chapter focuses on Texas and cotton workers and suggests that many migrants, especially those who were not from south Texas, found ways to parlay cotton work into other forms of work on railroads, vegetables, sugar beets, and leave the state.

The second major exception was the small but pivotal Mexican middle class. Over time they brought families and worked in more middle class positions. By 1930 many had American born children and could be thought of as being rooted in the United States. While two thirds of the families are solidly working class, this study also provided information on the development of what became the Mexican-American middle class. Twenty percent of workers were in one form of white collar profession or another; many of these were the children of skilled or semi-skilled migrants who worked disproportionally as clerks and other types of low paying non-labor jobs. This middle class also showed some interesting characteristics- it was surprisingly common for a family to change the spelling of their names to Anglicize it. They also tended to be categorized as “white” on the race category more often- though a direct comparison with 1920 is not possible because in 1920 most Mexicans were categorized as “white” while in 1930 there was a separate race category for “Mexican” (which was eliminated in later years).

However, does not mean that most these Mexicans were disappearing into the Anglo majority in the US. Looking at residential information, the GIS maps of the location of

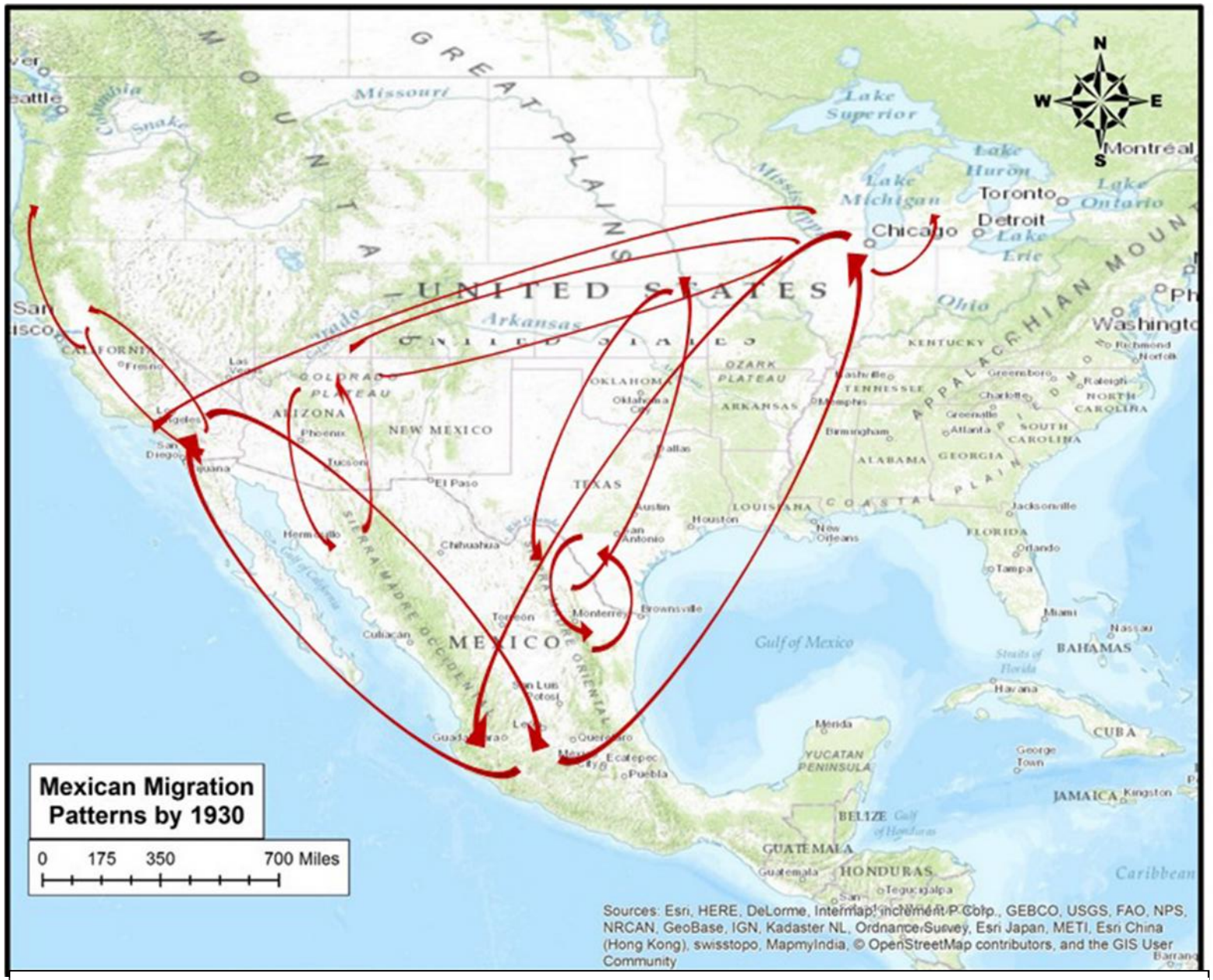
individual migrants, even the wealthiest Mexicans were living among other Mexicans, in the large Mexican-American communities that were being created around the country, rather than becoming part of the white middle class America. I believe that the two general groups, the settlers and the migrants, shared considerable overlap but occupied different positions in the same general economy of migrant labor. These settled migrants could be tenant farmers, or grocery clerks but shared a common feature, that is, they were not migrant workers. They formed a new feature of US communities, as they created or grew ethnic Mexican barrios in the 1920s and 1930s across the Southwest and Midwest. But, it is important to note that their settlement was made possible by the migratory majority and vis versa. The urban settlers were the brokers who made the core of ethnic Mexican neighborhoods, especially the civic life of these places, but also acted as critical nodes in migrant networks, especially in creating new connections in the US to new employers and locations. Many kept in contact with their home communities and felt themselves as part of Mexico, even as they became a critical part of the new Mexican world in the US.

For the migratory majority, trajectories varied. Some could and did become more settled over time, bringing their families from Mexico to the US, though few in the cohort did so. Many stayed in the US without families, in one place, or migrated within the US until the onset of the Great Depression. Many more went back to Mexico, regularly and irregularly. As I discuss in chapter 5, circular migration only sometimes fit seasonal or yearly patterns, just as often were those that went to Mexico every few years, or because of a major event like a wedding, death or deportation. Many of these migrants only showed up once or twice on government databases in the United States. They were the physical embodiment of transnational migration, spending time in both countries and keeping ties to both places.

In summary, while most of the national and Chicago cohorts were not found in 1930, enough of them were found in the US and in Mexico to give outlines of migration, mobility, and occupation patterns among Mexican migrants in the 1920s. The vast majority of people were not living in the same place in 1930 than they were in 1920, and in a majority of those cases they had moved significant distances. Large minorities of people did not move far, these were by far the most settled migrants, with large families, often in Texas and living in Mexican communities in urban centers or as tenant farmers. A lot these people however were the emerging middle class of brokers whose fate is linked, but separate from that of most Mexicans, who returned to Mexico during the Great Depression, with far reaching consequences for society in central Mexico as seen in chapter 6.

The spread of Mexican Migration

There was not a single migration, or type of migration, but rather multiple types of migration, with local and regional circuits overlapping with national and transitional circuits going across the US and back to Central Mexico. It is abundantly clear from the data available that this migration was not one directional, and that people did not live in any location for very long. I believe this is because they are primarily migratory laborers who move with employment. This means that a large proportion of them circulated back into Mexico, either regularly or semi-regularly. This also means that many Mexicans were migrating within the US as seasonal laborers. This is especially true of agricultural workers, where a significant proportion followed regional migratory circuits like cotton from east Texas to Oklahoma, vegetable harvest up and down the Rio Grande, the beet harvest from Colorado to Michigan, cotton in Arizona, and the Fruit and vegetable crops from the Imperial Valley to the San Joaquin Valley of California.



Map 2.12. Regional and local migration circuits overlapped with national and Transnational patterns throughout the 1920s. Most of the new migration was driven by people from central Mexico.

Mexican Migration Patterns by 1930. By author, using ArcMap GIS.

While the literature has focused on those that stayed in particular communities, and the new but small middle class laid down deep roots in communities and tenant farmers in Texas stayed year after year, it is clear that the majority of Mexican migrants did not settle in any one place. They moved quite often within the US and back into Mexico. Within the US, people in the sample moved from the border region to California and the Midwest, and those that did stay in their region tended to move to other states. Mexicans in the US did not settle down in one place, instead the migrated from one place to another depending on the jobs and seasons of the year.

The Chicago study illustrates these trends. In 1917 the Mexican population was negligible, by 1920 it was 5,000 people and 15,000 by 1930. For example, if everyone who came to the city stayed, it would have an average of 2,500 migrants per year for those two years previously. If everyone left, 5,000 people would have to come every year. Obviously the rate is somewhere in between, and while we don't know the year to year rate- we know the ten-year rate for the cohort that was there in 1920- 7%. It's a reasonable assumption that most of the people in those 7% were settled in the city more or less permanently. It is likely that the attrition rate is not linear, with 30-45% leaving within a year, another 25% within two years, and a much lower rate in later years- and that the rate varied year after year in location after location based on the local economy, events in Mexico and US border enforcement. It is likely that the rate dropped after the 1924 Immigration Act for example, as the costs of migrating increased. However, for the purposes of this simple model I will make a simple assumption: if the attrition rate is linear, then 10.33% of the original population left each year, it means a city's Mexican-American community is made up a combination of people who are coming, leaving and staying. In this theoretical model, the city contained about 2300 who had arrived more than a year previously, and 2700 who had arrived within a year. Each year's population would contain both- a new crop

of arrivals, plus the cumulative amount of people who had arrived every year before then, minus the departures. This is why a city could have both a growing community of permanently settled migrants, while at the same time the majority of new arrivals departed within the decade, if not within several years. Eventually the settled population would grow large enough that it would surpass and dwarf that of the migratory population, even as the underlying dynamic of the majority of new arrivals not settling in the long run stays the same.

This is in fact that happened in most urban centers, even if the departure rates varied city by city and Chicago's attrition rate of 93% within ten years was unusually high. I argue that the same dynamic played out in Los Angeles and San Antonio, and that even if the rate dropped after the establishment of a more restrictive immigration regime in 1924, the creation of the border patrol, and the criminalization of undocumented status- circulation to other parts of the United States and back to Mexico remained the underlying dynamic of Mexican migration up unto the Great Depression. As such, those who stayed in a place permanently with families, especially through the Depression were the minority story, the survivors of the 1930s who anchored Mexican-American communities, but not the entire, or even majority story.[44] While the trend toward settlement did grow after 1924, circular migration and domestic (U.S.) migration continued in force and was more prevalent than settlement.

When thinking about how migration worked both internally to the US and back into Mexico, we should think of major hubs like Chicago, Los Angeles, San Antonio, and others, not simply as destinations for migrants, but as hubs in an entire migrant economy that received and sent out migrants to far flung locations throughout the year. By the late 1920s as the number of

[44] George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

Mexicans in US cities continued to grow, so did the communities in major urban centers and the number of people who were going back and forth. These communities were anchored by the new middle class of business owners, those who took in boarders, served as grocers, established the Spanish language press, and created a whole world of mutual and labor organizations.

Meanwhile those that went to Mexico showed a different pattern. The majority of them ended up in small rural communities, as farmers, often owners of land. This indicates that they had gone to the US for a short time in order to make money and returned. Some railroad workers moved up in economic class by migration, but that was a minority. The same is true of a small number of skilled tradesmen. It is unclear if they were skilled workers before they ever left to the US, but they continued their trade when they returned to Mexico, usually in urban centers.

These trends support evidence from Chapter five, that for most people, however, migration was unlikely to change one's economic position permanently. Instead it served as a way to get much needed money from short term work and in order to secure their economic position in a time of economic and political chaos. In the sample population, the second generation men and women who were found in Mexico in 1930 tended to follow the occupations or status of their parents. With the exception of one woman, the women who were often girls in 1920 were married by 1930, usually to a laborer or farmer. In chapters four and five I expand on this lack of mobility and why migration was not so much a way to climb economic status for return migrants as a secure the status they already had at an uncertain time.

It is important to make a distinction between the actions of migrants and their intentions. Many who left hoped to stay, to have a steady job that would allow them to, while many that stayed hoped to one day go back to Mexico. Likewise, circular migration, both within the US and back to Mexico could be both regular and highly irregular. There were some established

seasonal routes that I will discuss in chapters 3 and 4, but a lot of this movement was irregular and haphazard, occurring when a person lost a job, was deported, or a major life event called them back to Mexico. While a person could say they intended to go back every year, such regularity was the exception rather than the norm. I will discuss more of this in chapter five.

Overall, this study sought to follow the patterns of mobility among Mexican migrants in the early 20th century, taking 1920 as the starting point since that is the first census after the acceleration of Mexican migration to the US in the 1910s. More than 50% of the migrants went back to Mexico at some point before 1930. This trend was strongest in the Midwest and California, and based on information in the next chapter, shows that more than Texas, these area's migrants came from central Mexico.

CHAPTER 3

Navigating the Borderlands

Building a Mexican Public Sphere and Migrant Networks into and out of Texas 1910-1931

The borderlands between Mexico and the United States had lain beyond the limits of state power from the pre-colonial period to the late nineteenth century. Settlers, colonists and migrants from the Aztec, Spanish, Comanche, French, American, and Confederate powers had come and gone while the region remained largely beyond the control of distant states. The situation changed in the years before the Mexican revolution, when new settlers--migrants from central Mexico for the most part-- profoundly changed the physical, economic and social patterns of the region and the borderlands the center of a new cross border economy. While the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 surrendered much of northern Mexico to the United States, a distinct political economy developed on both sides of the border through the late nineteenth century, in the cotton growing regions of Texas and Arizona in the US and the Laguna region of Mexico and in the mining districts of Arizona and Sonora. In these borderlands, labor migration became a signature part of the landscape. Mexicans traveled back and forth across a relatively open border for seasonal work. In the early 20th century these migration patterns changed, as borders were created, and as Mexicans started to migrate in large numbers from central Mexico deeper into the interior of the United States. This chapter shows how conditions in the borderlands gave impetus to the creation of patterns and infrastructures that supported the expansion of migration networks outward across the western United States.

From the early twentieth century to the Great Depression, the number of people crossing the borderlands between Mexico and the United States in both directions rose from less than

5,000 a year to about 100,000 a year. Against a backdrop of social, economic and political tensions, myriad social actors—Mexican and American politicians, corporate officers, the Border Patrol, managers of agribusiness, labor agents, brokers, and various other intermediaries—contended with the interests and actions of migrants. The conditions under which migration occurred were continuously renegotiated by the actions of migrants--organizing, using the institutions available to them, quitting jobs, small acts of daily resistance, and most importantly, voting with their feet. In this chapter I argue that inter-personal networks operated in conjunction with a Mexican *mutualistas* (mutual-aid societies), Catholic churches, businesses, newspapers, and Mexican consulates, all of which comprised a Mexican social world that supported migrants' interests in the US. In addition to providing daily utility to communities, this social world, especially newspapers and the consulates constituted a public sphere within which information flowed and people appealed to the US government for better conditions as Mexican citizens. This relationship between civil organizations, and a newspaper-consulate based public sphere constituted a space that information flowed through and people used to resist farmer control.

Rather than focusing on immigration policy debated in distant capitals, this chapter argues that the words and actions of people on the ground shaped how policy was enforced and determined how migration patterns changed within and eventually out of Texas. In these years, as anti-migrant sentiment rose, efforts by both governments to create a real and enforceable border crystalized into a system that sought to police the movement of people, goods and microbes across the border. Meanwhile, landowners and agricultural corporations sought to expand industrial agriculture in the borderlands by creating a large, docile, deportable and politically powerless workforce, mostly comprising Mexican migrants. I argue that, despite their efforts however, both governments and landowners were largely unsuccessful in realizing their

respective visions. As Mexicans responded to landholders' attempts to control them, a back and forth struggle ensued that shaped all of the major legislation in this era. Landholders used their power in the Texas State Legislature and Congress to shape immigration policy to their wishes, most notably by exemptions from restrictions during World War I and in the 1924 Immigration Act, and in the creation of the border patrol that year. Yet the actions of migrants forced them time and again to return to the legislature to stop migrants from leaving and to change the ways laws were enforced.

Mexican migrants became increasingly sophisticated at navigating controls in the borderlands. Making use of a range of institutions such as *mutualistas,* consulates, and newspapers, along with the same networks that helped them travel to the US in the first place, these migrants used information, distance, and competition to play government and agribusiness agents against each other. Working with various types of brokers, migrants sought better opportunities, found ways to skirt immigration authorities, and organized with other migrant groups to form unions and seek political power. When confronted with the hard power of violence they turned to newspapers and consulates to press their case through the public sphere. For others, staying in Texas was not worth it, and with increasing frequency they went elsewhere. Eventually migration patterns shifted, as more and more people left the Texas agricultural fields for jobs in cities and the Midwest. Mexicans used an infrastructure that was made up of not only of railroads, cars, mail, telegram, and banks, among other things. More importantly, they worked with each other, through Spanish language newspapers, consulates, boarding houses, businesses, mutual organizations, health organizations, to make their lives easier and to make migration to new places possible. Rather than simple victims of international

& domestic capitalism, Mexicans countered attempts to control them and continued to migrate into new areas as a means to improve their lives.

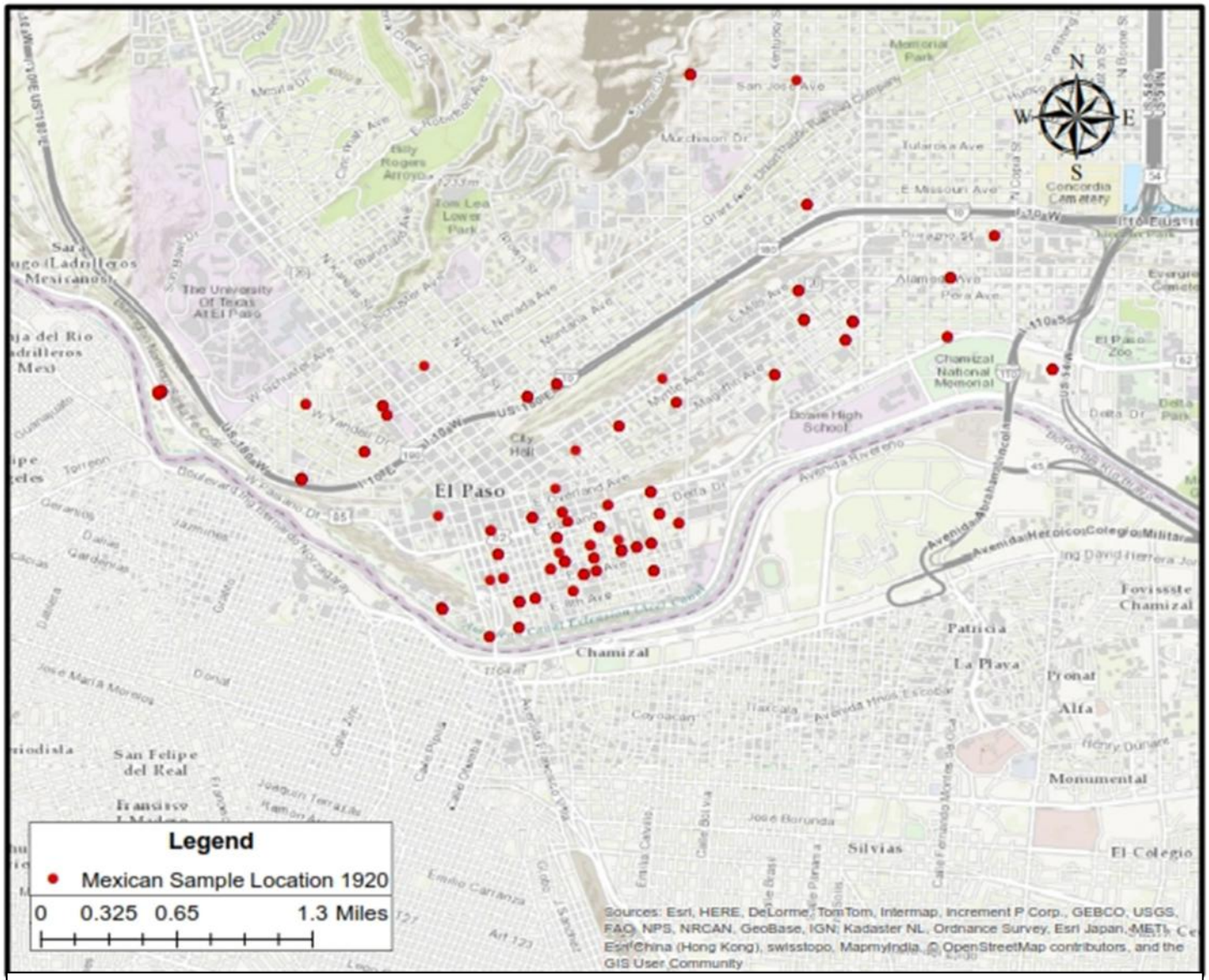
While the scope of the chapter covers the entire borderlands between the two countries, it is centered on events and people in two cities, San Antonio and El Paso, the two cities that were the primary hubs of Mexican migration in the United States. As the end point of the Mexican Central Railroad and with railroad connections across the west and into the Midwest, El Paso was the primary entry point for migrants from Mexico. Situated in the center of Texas, at the juncture of several railroads and many large industries and recruiting stations, San Antonio was, as Anne Watson described, an inland port that served as the "major site of the transportation network out to the rest of the country."[1] As major railroad hubs with large and varied economies, both cities acted as both destinations and major nodes in the migration system. While the two cities do not represent the entire region, and many of the particulars were different in other places, the patterns in these two cities capture much of the contours of Mexican migration in this period.

While borderlands and Chicano history literatures have often stressed cross border interconnections, the scholarship has usually portrayed migration as a precursor to the creation of ethnic communities in the US. Scholars have focused upon the slow creation of a Mexican-American identity and on the rise of a political economy that trapped Mexicans/Mexican-Americans as cheap, dependent and deportable labor, casting them as second class citizens outside of the political community. However, both narratives underestimate the continuing

[1] Anne Cloe Watson, "Mexican Families in Transit North Through the Inland port of San Antonio", Executive, International Institute, YWCA, San Francisco 1929, at the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago, Chicago Illinois

influence of circular and internal migrations, and have downplayed the extent to which migrants in US communities have stayed connected to communities in Mexico, especially in the period between after 1920. This chapter shows how migrants in Texas made use of Mexican-derived organizations to create networks that allowed them to migrate within and eventually outside of Texas and into the west and Midwest.

While various scholars have worked on Mexican and Mexican American communities in this time period, however few have looked at the process of migration itself. Emilio Zamora, David Montejano, David Gutierrez, among others have written about organizing, *mutualistas*, newspapers, consuls, other organizations as part of the history of communities. I argue that in playing an important role in community-formation, these organizations also made it possible for people to migrate back and forth, decreasing the costs and difficulties of migrating and using movement as a means to a better life. They made it possible for communities across vast spaces to be linked to one another. Scholars who have examined migration have focused on policy or labor agents as the primary focus of their inquiries, negating the role of migrant agency. While labor agents could introduce Mexicans to new industries and workplaces, migrants would not stay or continue to come to an employer without the information and structure that networks provided. The same is true with regard to policy, as migrants often found ways to challenge and circumvent legal controls, albeit within a limited framework. Through their actions, Mexicans created what amounted to an infrastructure of transportation, information and associational networks that sustained new communities, shaped migration patterns, and allowed people to organize for change.



Map 3.1. The Mexican population of El Paso was large and constantly changing. The city was at the crossroads of the mining, railroad, and agriculture industries. Map by Author, created April 29, 2015. Data from Author's *Location of Mexican Sample in El Paso 1920*.

The Growth of Agribusiness

Cotton moved into Texas in the 1820's, brought by colonists from the southern United States who sought to expand slavery westward. They eventually came into conflict with the Mexican government, which had outlawed slavery in 1821, resulting in the Texas-Mexican war in which Mexico lost control of much of its Texas territory to American colonists. The Mexican-American war ten years later cost Mexico the rest of Texas, as well as what became California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and Colorado. In the 1860s the American Civil War resulted in a blockade of much of the South such that most cotton could not be shipped for export. The Texas port of Brownsville emerged as the major site of cotton exports, most of which went to the Mexico port of Matamoros from where it was then sent to the rest of the world as Mexican cotton. While war time cotton smuggling provided a temporary boom to Matamoros and South Texas, the long term effect was to encourage the growth of a domestic cotton industry in Mexico, which significantly picked up during the 1880s after the arrival of rail transport made it possible for the Laguna region of Mexico to became the country's cotton growing hub. Over time the Laguna region developed a symbiotic relationship with the cotton industry of its northern neighbor, Texas, which made the Laguna both a destination and a sending region for migrants. Laguna cotton matured several weeks earlier than in Texas, its season lasting from August to October, though by late September growers had to contend with a roving population of 30,000 pickers who left the fields for better wages in Texas. Laguna growers sought to prevent workers from leaving for Texas or Texans from recruiting in the region, especially before the picking was finished, but were for the most part unsuccessful. The region's cotton economy

became a midway station, with wages sufficient enough to attract people but not high enough to keep them.[2]

On the other side of the border, in Texas, cotton production boomed even as Mexican-Americans found themselves at the bottom of the state's industrialization of agriculture. The Reclamation Act of 1902 provided federal funds for western states to irrigate, dam, and to support projects to control rivers and create new farmland. When Texas was added to the states covered in the Reclamation Act in 1906, the added capital allowed for agriculture to expand on a new industrial scale. As the irrigation of the lower Rio Grande valley in the early twentieth century allowed for the cultivation of vast new lands, the cotton crop of Texas more than doubled in several years and new areas opened up for vegetable cultivation. In Dimmit County, an area known as the Winter Garden, the population increased from 8,000 to 36,000 in twenty years and land prices spiked with year-round growing. However, this expansion of intensive agricultural production did not do much to benefit the local Mexican-American population. As intensive irrigation-based agriculture replaced ranching in southern Texas, much of the Mexican-American population lost control of their land, and landowners and tenants became laborers and sharecroppers. In El Paso and San Antonio, the local Tejano population lost political and cultural control of the cities through a combination of racial exclusion, vote fraud, violence and the arrival of tens of thousands of Anglos from the southeast. Increasing segregation throughout this period truncated the realm of possibilities, especially political and economic, for the Mexican-Americans and the Mexican migrants, who were arriving in even greater numbers.[3] By the start

[2] Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (Texas A&M University Press, 1993): 16-17

[3] David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (University of Texas Press, 1987)

of the Mexican Revolution there was a flourishing cross border movement that was undergirded by the cotton economy.

The Bureau of Immigration and Labor Agents

Created in 1903 under the Department of Commerce and Labor to man "inland ports," the Immigration Bureau originally had 183 agents to cover thousands of miles of the borders between the United States and Mexico. It lacked the ability to patrol, make arrests, or establish much jurisdiction beyond their stations. Its weak presence matched Mexicans' peripheral status in US immigration policy, which prioritized restricting Asian and European migration.[4] Immigration officials viewed Mexicans as the "natural" peasants of the southwest, and had scant interest in their movements. Border inspectors routinely allowed Mexicans to pass without question, sometimes not even looking up from their newspapers. The expansion of ferry services across the Rio Grande concerned the Inspector General of El Paso only when he received reports that Europeans and Chinese were disguising themselves as Mexicans in order to cross the border.[5]

This attitude was shared not only by agents on the ground but by much of the leadership of the Immigration Bureau. Supervising Inspector Frank W. Berkshire and even Commissioner-General F.P. Sargent were not concerned with Mexican migration.[6] Berkshire dismissed

[4] Kelly Lytle Hernandez, *Migra! A History of the US Border Patrol* (University of California Press, 2010), 17-69

[5] Inspector Seraphic Report and letters, Bureau of Immigration, 51423/1- A, INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

[6] Commissioner General, "Memorandum for the Secretary", March 12 1913, Bureau of Immigration, 52546/31-G, INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

allegations that companies and agents were directly importing workers from Mexico and instead believed that the spread "knowledge that work at better wages than prevail in Mexico [is available in the US]" was an important driver of migration. Berkshire believed Mexicans worked in the US seasonally, for about six months a year. He continued, "is it not unnatural that [Mexicans] should acquaint their relatives and friends with the conditions in this country, thereby causing an almost automatic tide of immigration through Mexican border ports, especially when it is known that the wage in the United States ranges from four to six times that paid in Mexico?"[7] American officials often believed that migration was temporary and advantageous to the economic development of the US Southwest and were not willing to expend much effort in trying to stop migrants.

The Immigration Bureau sought to limit the entry of contract workers after the passage of the Alien Contract Labor Law in 1885. The 1910 Stone report was the first to focus on Mexican migration to the United States. It brought to the bureau's attention the rise of cross border movement, not only among those who lived along the border but those who had traveled far to jobs inside the US. Railroads had created a system of agents and advertisements that went out from El Paso and San Antonio into northern Mexico, where as many as 700 Mexicans were brought up at a time. Stone however concluded that it would be difficult to curb this movement as it was unlikely Mexicans could move from railroad to other types of work, despite the fact that the railroads were reporting a 50 to 60% loss rate to other types of employment. Even at this early date, much of the loss was to cotton and sugar beets. While he agreed that the companies were violating the alien contract labor law, he also argued that among "the largest employers of

[7] Berkshire to Commissioner General, January 10, 1913, Bureau of Immigration, 52546/31 F, INS Records 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

labor in the Southwest the claim is unanimous by such employers that the Mexican common laborer is a necessity in the development of this section of the United States".[8]

The bureau's attention turned to labor agents in 1908-10 when they received complaints about agents recruiting Mexicans to work on railroads in possible violation of the law. These investigations focused on several companies in El Paso who sent their business cards to Juarez, and which recruited workers through promises of jobs, even offering to pay for tickets on Mexican railroads to the border and offering food and accommodation.[9] Inspectors focused on individual agents themselves, Zarate & Avina, and Ramon Gonzalez, and the larger labor supply companies such as the Holmes Supply Company (which supplied the Santa Fe system with workers) and the L.H. Manning Company (which supplied the Southern Pacific), to determine whether they had violated the law against contract labor.[10]

In the early 1910s the Bureau of Immigration began to devise various plans to end what they believed were violations of the Labor Contract Law, or at least the spirit of the law. One early plan called for strict regulation of recruiting agents across the border, while another called for having the bureau itself manage the labor contract system for major railroads.[11] None of these

[8] Confidential Report by Frank R Stone to Supervising Inspector, June 23 1910, Bureau of Immigration, 52546/31 B, INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C

[9] Bureau of Immigration 1908-1911, 52546/31 A-C in the INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

[10] Entirety of series 52546/031 in INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.; For a longer treatment of the cases on Labor Agents see, Gunther Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor: Padrones and Immigrant Workers in the North American West 1880-1930* (Cambridge University Press, 2000)

[11] 52546/031 D-H, letter dated November 25th 1911 to Commissioner General of Immigration in DC, in INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

schemes lasted, yet they all held the common assumption that labor agents were the primary cause of Mexican migration and that if they could be controlled, so too would the migration.[12]

While labor agents certainly played a role in facilitating migration and in determining which specific companies hired Mexicans in large numbers, once a company or agent had brought in workers it became increasingly difficult for the agents to control them. In El Paso, migrants were not passive toward labor agents or bureau inspectors; rather, they used labor scarcity to negotiate the best terms from prospective employers. One Bureau agent described a process whereby once released, "There, agents representing the railroads and the ranches would make speeches about the delightful quarters, good pay and fine food they would have it they went to work for their company. When the promising was over, the agents would shout, 'This way for the Santa Fe,' 'this way for the South Pacific,' and so on, the men following the agent they thought offered the best or most benefits."[13]

Scholars have focused on the role of labor agents as key actors in the rise of Mexican migration, and while they played an important role I argue that it was ultimately a secondary role. Labor agents recruited workers throughout the borderlands, often ignoring the border. Their role was that of laying down paths, presenting choices to those who were new to labor migration and had never gone north before. Brokers facilitated, introducing Mexicans to new industries and cities, especially those far from the border. However, even the Bureau understood that migration would not cease if the labor recruiters went away, that information was spreading far beyond

[12] Laurencio Sanguino, "The Origins of Migration between Mexico and the United States, 1905-1945" (PhD Diss., University of Chicago, 2012).

[13] Clifford Alan Perkins, *Border Patrol* (Texas Western Press, 1978), 54. Quoted in George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*, Reprint edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 52.

those who first made it and was being used in different ways. Likewise, labor recruiters found themselves competing for labor as migrants held out for better wages and benefits.

The Mexican Revolution in the Borderlands

As battles waged over control of Tijuana, Piedras Negras and Cuidad Juarez, Bureau of Immigration inspectors up and down the line reported a drastic decline in migration. As mentioned in the last chapter, the destruction of northern railroads and the rise in violence made traveling across the country much more difficult. In 1910 there was a refugee crisis as the populations of border towns crossed into the US that lasted several weeks. In 1914, as the war between Huerta government and the Constitutionalists continued, refugees again poured across the border in several cities. US officials placed the refugees in large outdoor pens under guard, which caused great hardships for people seeking safety. The Supervising Inspector estimated that many of the refugees that came to the US in this period eventually stayed on the US in border towns.[14] In spite of the disruptions caused by the revolution, by 1915 migration had surpassed its pre-revolutionary levels and was climbing towards one hundred thousand people per year. As the revolution's violence moved to the center of the country, rail service in the northern half of the country resumed regular service and the flow of migrants going north became a torrent, despite violence in southern Texas. As a result, during the 1910s 500,000 migrants crossed into the United States, the bulk of them into Texas.

[14] Letters by Supervising Inspector F.W. Berkshire, Bureau of Immigration, 53108/71 A-Q, INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C; Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (Texas A&M University Press, 1993): 70-72

The literature on Mexican migration that covers the early twentieth century has often overlooked where exactly people were coming from, casting the journey to the US as one of encountering modern capitalism in the north. This ignores the fact that migrants were coming from the areas of Mexico were those most familiar with capitalism and agribusiness. These migrants came from the Mexican north and the central plains, where government-led industrialization had profoundly changed the landscape. Likewise, they came from areas of Mexico with long traditions in union and political organizing, revolutionary activity, and used that experience when they crossed the border. In the Rio Grande Valley, some Tejanos and Mexicans attempted revolution with the Plan de San Diego revolt.

In 1915 several groups of Mexicans and *Tejanos* inspired by the revolution south of the border, issued a manifesto called the Plan de San Diego. During the three previous decades Mexicans and *Tejanos* had been dispossessed of land, economic independence, and political power through Jim-Crow style laws, legal manipulations, and lynch mobs. With the start of the Mexican Revolution, anti-Mexican sentiment grew as Anglos began to see *Tejanos* as a potentially rebellious population. Mexicans and *Tejanos* saw the revolution differently, as inspiration. Many had been involved with the PLM previously, subscribing to *Rengeracion* and gaining experience in organizing revolution along the borderlands. Responding to the hyper racialized environment in South Texas, the Plan de San Diego called for a unification of oppressed people against the Anglos. Its backers organized several large raids and even moved against the massive King Ranch, but mostly conducted smaller raids across the border, where Mexican Constitutionalists gave them shelter. In southern Texas the response was swift: hundreds of Texas Rangers, local police, and several cavalry regiments of the US Army mobilized against the insurgents. While they were mostly unsuccessful at catching raiders, they

effectively terrorized the population of southern Texas with raids and arrests in Mexican communities. Between 500 and 3,000 people were killed without arrest or trial, according to Benjamin Johnson, and patrol agents at times shot indiscriminately at Mexican men whom they encountered.[15] The raids continued well into 1916 and ended when the Carranza government stopped giving the raiders safe haven after the revolutionary government was recognized by the United States.

Many more migrants joined the most radical unions in the country, such as the IWW, along with European immigrants and ethnic Americans in the western United States, participating in all of the largest strikes of the time. These efforts, were often met a brutal backlash, with violence from the companies and the state. While efforts through direct organizing continued in the 1920s, most Mexicans found other means to organize in American society. In 1913 a multiethnic coalition organized under the United Mine Workers and struck against wage cuts at Ludlow, Colorado. The strike continued until state and private militias opened fire on the camp where most of the strikers lived, killing dozens of people including women and children.[16] Mexican participation in organizing became much more pronounced at Bisbee, Arizona, where Mexicans made up a majority of workers in the mines owned by Phelps Dodge. Striking under the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the Sheriff and many white townspeople came to believe that the strike was connected to Mexican revolutionary activity and

[15] For an account by a US Cavalry Officer of chasing the raiders, The Virgil N. Lott Narrative, "The Rio Grande Valley" Box 2R87 Vo 1 & 2 in the Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas Austin; Benjamin Heber Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005). James Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands: Anarchism and the Plan of San Diego 1904-1923* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1992). For an account of an earlier revolt along the border see, Elliott Young, *Catarino Garza's Revolution on the Texas-Mexico Border* (Duke University Press Books, 2004).

[16] Thomas Andrew, *Killing for Coal: America's: America's Deadliest Labor War* (Harvard University Press, 2008)

illegally rounded up and "deported" 1,300 strikers to New Mexico, the majority of which were Mexican.[17] Many more strikes and protests ended in violence in these years. [18]

Mexican and Tejano communities were hotbeds of labor organizing. Throughout the period thousands of Mexican and Mexican-Americans took part in relatively peaceful union activities. Among the tens of the thousands of migrants were many who had been involved with the labor movement in Mexico, once in the US, they began to form unions in the 1910s. Some were small local unions like the Catholic Workers Union which organized workers in the cotton fields of Crystal City Texas while others had transnational links to Mexico such as the *Unión Ferrocarrilera y Gremios Confederados del Trabajo, La Orden Suprema de Empleados Ferrocarrileros Mexicanos*.[19] By the early 1920s, the Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (CROM), led by Luis Napoleón Morones, was the largest and most powerful labor organization in Mexico. The organization came to agreements with Samuel Gomper's American Federation of Labor (AFL) that declared "support for the 'principle of self-restraint' whereby CROM promised

[17] Katherine Benton-Cohen, *Borderline Americans: Racial Divisions and Labor War in the Arizona Borderlands* (Harvard University Press, 2011)

[18] In another incident, Mexicans and African-Americans living in Breckenridge Texas were attacked by a group called the "White Owls". The organization, describing itself as being for the betterment of white labor, with the tacit consent of local authorities, decided to drive Mexicana and African-American out of town. In the race riot that followed, Taylor reported that, "scores of Negros and Mexicans have left town [Breckenridge, Texas] within the past 24 hours. The Negros are by far in the majority of those leaving. Sudden exodus followed by a march of a crowd of men, estimated at 300, through the Negro and Mexican districts of Breckenridge last night and alleged threats from individuals that Mexicans and Negros must leave Breckenridge or have their homes burned. Other threats of violence are alleged to have been sent the Negros and Mexicans. Many positions and jobs held by Negros and Mexicans were vacant today. Included among these was a Negro school teacher's position, that person having left town." The Mexican consul demanded protection for Mexicans in the town but it is unclear in the records whether any action was taken. November 15, 1922, in Carton 12, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[19] Petition of Demands, Catholic Workers Union, in Folder 12:30, in Carton 12, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California; Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (Texas A&M University Press, 1993): Ch 3

to pressure the Mexican government to restrict immigration."[20] Both unions came to see the free flow of labor as undermining their positions, and both chose to include only naturalized citizens in their ranks. This later decision made the concept of transnational labor organizing much harder to sustain and brought the charged issue of identity to the foreground.

The limits of union organizing within already existing structures are illustrated in the case of the CROM and AFL. The two largest confederations of unions in their respective countries, their cooperation was meant to improve conditions for workers on both sides, and offer Mexicans in the United States a pathway into American unions. Critical in making this alliance work were the efforts of Federico and Clemente Idar, sons of Nicasio Idar who founded the railroad workers union in San Luis Potosí and Nuevo León. Federico worked on both sides before becoming become director of the *Unión General de Conductores, Maquinistas, Garroteros y Fogoneros* and later a PNR senator in Mexico City. Clemente brought together community organizations across the Texas to form *El Congresso Mexicanista*. However, these efforts at transnational unionism ended when joined the AFL and negotiated with the CROM. Part of this agreement was that immigrants had to learn English and become citizens to become union members. Clemente sought to organize Mexicans in the US and after several attempts by him and local unions or organize Mexicans in the field of Texas were unsuccessful, he came to see migration as a major problem. He came to believe that the task of unionization could not be done as long as Mexicans were a mobile population and new arrivals kept arriving from Mexico. In speeches and publications, he argued that migration weakened unionizing efforts and stressed the need for Mexicans in the US to assimilate and become citizens. This is not to say that they

[20] Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (Texas A&M University Press, 1993): 52

were unsympathetic to migrants, Clemente in particular pressed for the incorporation of Mexican nationals into American unions and strongly argued against discrimination in the work place. Yet he saw the continual flow of people as a major problem, as new migrants depressed wages for those on the US side while hurting Mexico's ability to develop its own industrialization, undermining efforts to improve the lot of the working men on both sides. Later, in addition to encouraging Americanization efforts, Clemente Idar helped the Mexican Consulate in its repatriation program of the early 1930s.[21]

Ultimately most Mexican migrants choose not to become involved in union organizing. The costs of joining unions or radical movements was often violence against people and communities and even death. Furthermore, the large mainstream unions did not make space for Mexicans, insisting on citizenship requirements and discriminating against those who did join by blocking them from the most desirable jobs. Many Mexican migrants felt alienated by the American labor movement because of these actions.[22] They declined to change their citizenship, seeing that they would still be seen as "Mexicans" and discriminated against despite their naturalization. Small single-occupation focused unions that conducted business in Spanish had more success organizing Mexicans, but they were not strong outside of their local urban bases in San Antonio, El Paso, and other cities. There were few spaces in the union space where migrants could organize *as* Mexicans and even these were often tied to an agenda in Mexico. As I show in

[21] Box 2-3. The Federico Idar Papers; and Box 8-9, Clemente Idar Papers, Benson Latin American Library, University of Texas, Austin Texas

[22] The position of Mexican elites is probably best summarized by Conrado Espinoza's "El Sol de Texas", a novel where two Mexican families who lose their livelihood to the revolution go to Texas to seek a fortune and instead find misfortune, as a series of moves around the state result in economic, social and moral ruin that costs two character's their lives. The family's salvation comes from the Cruz Azul which sends them back to a grateful Mexico. – Only in Mexico could the Mexicans find redemption, the US is a false temptation. Conrado Espinoza, *El Sol de Texas*, (re-printed, Arte Publico Press, 2007, original 1926)

the next section, as people were presented with the opportunity to leave, they increasingly chose to leave the state. Leaving and moving to a new place was often the easiest way to resolve difficult situations for many people. This meant that in the fields, the primary points of contention were over freedom of movement and the means by which people went about it. This is not to say Mexicans did not organize and use institutions to advance their interests; they did, but in a different way. They used *mutualistas*, newspapers, Mexican Consulates, and middlemen to move back and forth between Mexico and the US, and within in the US, to obtain information about jobs and cities, and to push back against US authorities.

World War I Bracero Program

Even as unionizing activity found a new impetus in the World War I economic expansion, a wartime labor program brought tens of thousands of Mexicans into the agricultural, mining, railroad and beet industries. After Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1917 over President Wilson's veto, a new literacy test, new fees, and a new willingness by the Bureau of Immigration to use Liable to be a Public Charge (LPC) as a reason to deny immigrants entry threatened to curtail the tide of Mexican migration. Migrants could be denied entry if agents thought that they might become a public charge in the future, i.e. that they may not be able to support themselves and would need the help of the government or charities. In practice this gave agents wide discretion to deny entry or even deport people based on race, creed, sexuality, or health reasons. If a person did become a public charge, accept charity for any reason, they were

liable to be deported, and banned from future entry into the US.[23] Hundreds of letters poured into the offices of the Bureau and members of Congress from agribusiness, railroad, and mining companies lobbying to relax restrictions on labor, especially the Alien Contract law.[24] When the United States entered World War I, Herbert Hoover, who oversaw the wartime food programs, urged the Commissioner of Immigration to relax enforcement as it hurt wartime food production. Secretary of Labor William Wilson created a temporary program that exempted Mexicans from the literacy test and the Alien Contract Labor Law, allowing some companies to import workers directly and to pay their fees. While the exemption originally covered only agricultural workers, by 1918 it expanded to cover railroad, mining, and other industries. Over 73,000 Mexicans participated in the program until it expired in 1921.

This first Mexican *bracero* program was riddled with problems of control over recruitment and relation of labor, and ultimately most workers came without contracts, going around the process all together. After railroad service going north to the United States was re-established following the pause brought about by the Revolution, migration took off. Historian Saul Alanis has used Mexican sources to estimate the volume of migration in these years. He determined that in 1916, 17,198 legal immigrants came to the US and another 83,700 came without paying the head tax or taking the literacy test. In 1917, 16,438 legally migrated and 123,000 came without going through the requirements; and in 1918 17,602 came legally with 69,000 coming around those controls.[25] That is to say, the program spurred the growth of

[23] For longer discussion on L.P.C. uses see Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011).

[24] Many letters can be found in 54261/202 in INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

[25] Fernando Saul Alanis, *El Primero Programa Bracero y el Gobierno de México 1917-1918* (Colegio de San Luis Potosí, 1999).

migration outside the normal controls of head tax or the exceptions under contract. This was all in addition to the workers who came under contract 1919-1921 and the contract program itself was rife with desertions. Alanis estimated that in the first year of the program, more than half the workers abandoned their post.[26] The program facilitated the spreading of Mexican migration across a wider geographic region, establishing colonies in areas where they had not been present before and laying the groundwork for migrant networks out of the borderlands in the 1920s. The system that was created to keep track of *bracero* workers was not effective, nor were inducements for workers to stay with one company. Many companies purposefully sought to undermine the government-sponsored program by advertising and luring workers away from other companies, while others created their own ad hoc hiring programs.

In order to understand how the first bracero program unfolded, it is important to understand the logic of the people who ran the Bureau of Immigration. While the program proved to be very controversial with the public, most within the government supported it. In El Paso, the Supervising Inspector F. W. Berkshire, who had held his post for more than a decade, continued to see Mexicans as birds of passage who would return home after working for several months and who thus posed no threat to the American working man. In a letter to the Chairmen of the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, Secretary of Labor W. B. Wilson argued that it was preferable to have Mexican laborers since they had always come and left, and were preferable to the alternative, immigration from Asia and the Philippines.[27]

[26] ibid

[27] May 31, 1917 W. B. Wilson to Senator John Burnett, 54261/202 in INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

The way the program was structured made it difficult to control both workers and those who hired them. Companies applied to the bureau for a certain number of contract workers, the bureau in turn registered those workers. Companies withheld twenty-five cents a day from the worker's wages, to be given at the end of the contract, as an incentive to stay the entire term, and savings accounts were set up through the Post Office bank. However, companies for the most part did their own hiring, often working through private agencies, and they often did not inform the bureau properly of who they were hiring, what wages they were paying, and conditions of that employment. Meanwhile, those in the Bureau of Immigration declined to deport or arrest workers who did not finish their contract.[28] It soon became apparent that the bureau was not in much of a position to control either employers or migrants.

Some employers soon realized that there was little or no penalty for hiring workers outside the formal contract system. In fact, it was easier to hire workers from other companies than to go through the effort of requisitioning new workers from the border. Part of the problem was that there was no mechanism for migrants to switch employers, something that particularly worried railroad companies. Railroads were used to hiring workers who were off season from the fields and vice versa.[29] Companies got around the program's inflexibility by simply luring workers with better wages. Companies that were left out of the program, especially those in mining (which was added later) and manufacturing, looked to railroads and beet workers as a source of labor. Meanwhile, beet growers turned to cotton workers in Texas as a plentiful source

[28] Ibid

[29] May 30, 1917 Murrell Buckner Superintendent of the Union Terminal to Senator Chas. A Culberson, in 54261/202 in INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

of labor.[30] One Michigan beet grower even advertised on radio stations near the border for workers in Texas to come north.[31] Employers who followed contracting rules complained to the bureau to do something, denouncing other firms for committing fraud, and in Texas local police did in fact arrest workers who tried to leave before their contract was out.[32] The bureau estimated the desertion rate at around 30%. Inspectors became increasingly concerned about the torrent of violations they saw, but throughout the program they stood firm when it came to not using force themselves.[33]

There was little the bureau could do to control the movement of labor. There was more demand for Mexican labor than the bureau was willing to supply and the advantage of skipping a contract was worth losing the money that had been withheld and return transportation to the border that the contracts guaranteed. Perhaps more to the point, many workers would rather not leave just yet and wanted to work in other places before returning home. Within the bureau, letters about laborers leaving the fields came in from cotton farmers and railroads almost as soon as the program began in September 1917.[34] In some cases the mobility was aided by the employers, such as the Los Alamitos Sugar Company, which claimed the right to give workers to other companies so long they got the same wage.[35]

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[30] April 23 1919, No 6008/1 Berkshire to Commissioner General of the Bureau of Immigration DC, in 54261/202 in INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

[31] This prompted an inquiry by the Bureau of Immigration, however the paper work has been lost, 56,134-268 in INS, NARA, Washington D.C

[32] Correspondence in 54261/202 in INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

[33] January 28 1920, NO 5002/769 Acting Supervising Inspector to Commissioner General of Immigration DC; and 54261/ 202 Box I, II, III, IV in INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

[34] September 18, 1917 Letter to Bureau of Immigration in 54261/202 in INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

[35] October 22 1917, Los Alamitos Sugar Co, in 54261/202 in INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

Other employers objected to having their workers recruited away. At a farmers' meeting in 1920, one grower in Texas ranted against the "practice of 'labor theft', by farmers who had made no effort to get pickers into the country but offered enough of a premium to lure away the hands his neighbors had spent time and money in gathering them together. 'I had rather a man would come into my corn crib in the night and steal my corn than to have them bid my pickers away from me' he said amid applause." Others in the meeting wanted to ask attorneys to "investigate the feasibility and constitutionality of a law providing for the infliction of a proper penalty upon any person who shall by persuasion or otherwise induce contract labor to desert its employment, or two accept employment from such person during the term of such contract." Another attendee repeated the rumors that were circulating around Texas: "countless labor agents were taking Mexicans into the northern part of the United States as rapidly as they could be recruited, which was daily. [An agent] said he personally had send 3,000 hands to Michigan to work in the sugar beet fields… he said that many families were arriving in San Antonio that could be brought to the Gold Coast to pick cotton, but he must start work at once to get them as they were being gathered by other agents and sent north as rapidly as possible. Labor was scarce in the north and employers were sparing no pains to get them."[36] Ironically, the purpose of the meeting was to agree on a daily wage of $1.50 a day for labor so that employers would not compete against each other, apparently not noticing that such wage fixing was probably as much to blame for the exodus as anything else.

A Mexican labor agent named Herrera who participated in the wartime contract work summarized his experience, "I used to try to get cotton pickers in Laredo, but now all they have

[36] July 14, 1920 Farmers meeting at Corpus Christi, in Carton 12, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

got in their heads Chicago or Detroit. They won't stop in Texas for a $10 job. I did pay passports for Mexicans in Nuevo Laredo but they left after a day even when they were paid 2 1/2 cents a pound for cotton picking. We used to take their shoes and hats and put them in another house but they got away from us anyways in 1919, and we used to guard each door for the house they slept in on the big farm. We used to put their wives separate from the husbands, but the men left the wives to come north."[37] After trying to labor a few more years in the field, the labor agent joined his former workers and went to Chicago himself.

Mexican workers in many cases took action against bad employers, and while most walked away from a contract, others sought redress. As reports of desertions and abuse flooded the Bureau, the agency was forced to respond by working with consuls and law enforcement, on more than one occasion taking a stand against employers. After consuls started to file reports of abuse in the fields, a conciliation committee recommended a series of improvements in conditions.[38] In one case, Spreckels Sugar Company in California began to hire deputy sheriffs to watch Mexican laborers to keep them from leaving. The Mexican workers took their case to Consul General de Negri of the San Francisco Mexican Consulate who in turned forced the bureau of start an investigation into the matter.[39] Mexican workers also pressed the bureau on the issue of holding back wages and after the summer of 1918 the agency abolished the policy.[40]

[37] Herrera; stockyards, Chicago, June 30, 1929 in Folder 10.6 in Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[38] March 30, 1918 Commissioner of Conciliation to A. Caminetti, Commissioner-General DC in 54261/202 in INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

[39] April 1918, Letters in 54321/181 in INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

[40] July 27 1918, NO 502/767 Supervising Inspector Berkshire to all Inspectors in Charge, in INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

This is not to say the agency did not try to enforce contracts. In the summer and fall of 1919 it brought several men to the Special Board of Inquiry under Liable to be a Public Charge allegations for leaving their employer or for staying past the end of their contracts. In all of the cases the men were deported. In the case of one laborer, Lorenzo Martinez, deportation meant leaving behind a family he had brought to the United States (the wife and child ended up leaving the US to join him in Mexico).[41] For the most part however the Bureau claimed there was little it could do about the issue. By the summer of 1918, Berkshire estimated that information about work in the United States was so widespread in Mexico that migrants through El Paso would reach 100,000 a year by 1919. His estimate proved to be correct.[42] In a letter to the Commissioner General he argued that while the desertion problem was real it was not a critical issue because Mexicans returned naturally to Mexico.[43] In another, he argued that it was in the best interest of the country to know who came through the program because Mexicans would come as long as there were jobs to be had.[44] At the end of the wartime program on March 2, 1921, the Bureau let existing contracts expire and did not verify if those last workers left the country, assuming that they eventually would. This nuanced view was gradually supplanted in the 1920s as the Bureau, border patrol, State governments, growers and local governments took a much more hostile view of Mexican migrants and sought to control their movement.

[41] 54731/76, 54731/77, and 54647/69 Special Board of Inquiry in INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

[42] Series of Telegrams, July 1920 W. F. Berkshire in 54261/202 in INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

[43] March 14, 1918 No 6002/1 Supervising Inspector Berkshire to Commissioner General of Immigration DC in 54261/202 in INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

[44] July 8 1918, No 6002/1 Response by the Inspector General to the Commissioner General in 54261/202 in INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

At the end of World War I commodity prices dropped as the US entered a post-war recession. Tens of thousands of Mexicans who had flooded into the US between 1917 and 1921 to work in agriculture, railroads, mining and sugar beets, were suddenly out of work. This resulted in a drop in migration and the first large scale attempt to repatriate Mexicans back to Mexico by the Obregon government.[45] As discussed in the first chapter, the effort was mostly unsuccessful due to a combination of weak government support and the continued incentives for migrating north as the economy quickly recovered. Several industries, railroads, mining, vegetable farming and particularly cotton, experienced large turnover problems as migrants learned how to use them as a stepping stone for other work. The result was a cat and mouse game as growers turned to the state to control workers, while migrants developed more and more sophisticated ways of evading those controls.

Restricting Mexican Labor

In order to end large scale immigration from Europe, Congress passed the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924. Adding to previous restrictions, it utilized a systems of quotas to effectively eliminate most immigration from Europe and Asia. Not included was the Western Hemisphere, Mexico in particular. However, the head tax and literacy laws meant that many Mexican migrants after 1921 were in the country without visa or inspection.[46] While this was an

[45] Lawrence A Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897-1931: Socio-Economic Patterns* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980), 96-118

[46] They could also be in this category before 1921 if they didn't get a wartime exemption, but after a certain amount of time they could not be deported. Mexican Consulates began issuing certificates to longtime residents to prove their residency in the US before 1921.

administrative issue, the new law made defined them as unlawfully present, and anyone arriving after 1924 without proper documents was liable for deportation. In 1929, in a toughing of the immigration act, congress criminalized unlawful entry, making it a criminal misdemeanor in addition to the possibility of deportation. The law thus in effect made people "illegal".[47] Meanwhile, Mexicans continued to enter through a variety of methods, from official immigration to various forms of non-statistical entry that became illegal if they stayed or got jobs, to simply walking across where there was no border station.

After the passage of the 1924 Immigration Quota Act, Mexican migration became the focal point of immigration debate. While growers were able to defeat proposals in Congress to impose strict quotas on Mexicans in the 1924 Immigration Act, restrictionists were able to establish an effective quota by pressuring the Bureau of Immigration to enforce immigration laws in such a way as to reduce immigration. The result was a drastic decrease in the level of visas and border entries granted, and a major increase in the numbers of deportation by 1929. However, the policy did not decrease overall migration into the US, mostly pushing what would have been legal migration into the new "illegal" category. The policy made Mexican migration more of an undocumented problem and created a campaign for deportations before the start of the Great Depression.[48] From the records of the Immigration and Nationalization Service records in Washington DC, Mexican was geared not towards permanently deporting Mexicans from

[47] Mae M. Ngai, Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 58-71

[48] John Webber, "Homing Pigeons, Cheap Labor, and Frustrated Nativists: Immigration Reform and the Deportation of Mexicans from South Texas in the 1920s," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 44 (2013): 167-186.

South Texas so much as controlling the free movement of labor and setting the conditions under which Mexicans labored.

In the late 1920s, the most important political debate in Texas was over what was known as the Box Bill. Introduced in 1926 by Congressman John C. Box of east Texas, the bill sought to add Mexicans to the quota system that had been introduced in the 1924 Immigration Act. This quota would have been so small that it would have practically banned the legal migration of Mexicans into the United States. The push for the bill led to a series of Congressional hearings and a vigorous debate for the next several years, as proponents and opponents of the bill gave testimony in congress and mobilized votes. Within Congress arguments about Mexican migration came down to restrictionists and anti-restrictionists. The restrictionists saw Mexican migration as a threat to the American body politic, and the open migration of the 1920s as undermining the goals of the 1917 and 1924 Immigration Acts. Anti-restrictionists generally sought what Weber has described as "permanently marginal laborer" whose continued tolerance by Anglos in the US required endless work without any efforts at social improvement.[49] Both immigration restrictionists and anti-restrictionists were frustrated in their efforts not only in the political arena but on what actually happened in the fields and factories.

The Box Bill never passed. Agribusiness was against any legislation that might possibly hurt their supply of labor and the State Department opposed the message it would send to other countries in the Americas, and the Hoover Administration had promised a Presidential veto to the Mexican government if it passed. Afterwards, interest in its passage was lost among the

[49] John Webber, "Homing Pigeons, Cheap Labor, and Frustrated Nativists: Immigration Reform and the Deportation of Mexicans from South Texas in the 1920s," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 44 (2013): 176

public following the drop of Mexican migration that accompanied the Great Depression and as the focus of the debate shifted towards repatriation of those already in the county. The importance of the debate lies in what it revealed about the Texas' political economy and the ways in which the Mexican community and the government responded to large scale Mexican migration. New local laws, and new federal requirements for visas, head tax, and border inspection made legal migration much more difficult. The Bureau of Immigration and the new Border Patrol began to aggressively pursue migrants regardless of their legal status. In Texas the state passed new laws, ostensibly to improve public safety and to keep people from scamming workers. Meanwhile, the Texas Rangers continued to evolve their tactics in seeking to control the population, working with new Texas laws and local officials.

Starting with the creation of the Border Patrol in 1925 and gaining pace in 1928, border authorities began to enforce the law far more strictly than before as a result of public pressure. For the bureau and US Consuls in Mexico, this meant finding excuses to deny legal permission to enter, which led to a massive drop in the numbers of Mexicans *legally* admitted by the early 1930s. Most were kept out under the pretext of Liable to become a Public Charge, and the use of moral and hygienic exclusions also multiplied. After 1924 border posts began to require that Mexicans be medically inspected and washed when crossing the border and that residents of border towns that crossed regularly be washed once a month. This was an especially unpopular law that encouraged the rise of a trade in wash certificates.[50]

[50] This requirement had been eliminated at Ellis Island and was not required of every other racial group. A quarantine of Mexicans in Laredo gave birth to strict border enforcement and didn't discriminate between Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 57-81; Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America,* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 68-70.

But, the biggest threat to Texas employers' source of cheap labor was not Congress, but the continual movement of Mexicans out of those jobs and out of the state, by their own volition. Large landholders used the Texas state legislature to pass a series of laws that sought to restrict the free flow of Mexican migrants across the state. The first of these laws, passed during WWI, operated was aimed at sending workers to farms with labor shortages and bypassing labor agencies. The Bureau of Labor Statistics conducted surveys prior to a picking season and then directed workers to jobs in conjunction with the Federal Farm Labor Service. Surveys, perhaps not surprisingly, showed the greatest need in the lowest paying and most difficult jobs and attempted to keep migrants going there. The second of these laws adopted the logic of the Bureau of Immigration and targeted independent labor agents in order to end competition with the state's program. The Emigrant Labor Agency Law forbade labor agents from recruiting those who already had employment and restricted where they could recruit. Most importantly, however, all agents had to be registered in the state and pay a $500 bond, plus a bond of several thousand dollars for every county they recruited workers from, for each individual recruiter. This effectively made the practices of most recruiters illegal, as only the recruiters for the larges railroads in San Antonio paid the bond.

The third law passed by the Texas state legislature passed restricted the outward flow of labor from the state by targeting transportation, especially the rise in the use of automobiles as the primary mode of transport for migrants. The legislature passed the Motor Bus Law, restricting the use of personal vehicles to families of the owner and made it illegal to operate a bus or transportation business without a state license. As a result, Texas Rangers took the liberty of stopping groups of Mexicans as they traveled out of the state, arresting them if not everyone in the car was related. In one case, the Mexican Consul at San Antonio, Enrique Santibañez,

received numerous complains about stops around New Braunsfels, Texas. He made several inquiries to the county attorney who told him that he had no jurisdiction over Rangers' actions and in any case was sure the Rangers were right in their actions. The consuls in Texas and in other states reacted by issuing papers to migrants with automobiles certifying that they were migrating, to Mexico or other places to try to provide a defense if they were stopped.[51] Texan authorities mostly stood by their efforts as legal and justified.

Growers often worked with the Border Patrol seeking to manipulate government agencies to their advantage. Mr. Stillwell retaliated against workers who quit by calling the Border Patrol on his former employees, explaining, we "have a lot of Mexicans without papers but we cooperate with the immigration officers and don't let them get away. We rounded up a hundred and fifty who were leaving once."[52] The Patrol conducted more and more raids on farms and other firms that resulted in a torrent of correspondence from those for and against the raids. Still the Border Patrol only had 400 men along the entire two-thousand-mile southern border, and while it was very aggressive, it was not necessarily effective in reducing overall migration.[53]

The Border Patrol developed into an aggressive enforcement agency with little concern for the laws it was enforcing or the lives of people. As Kelly Hernandez has shown, the early agency was rife with former rangers and military men who saw their work in racist terms. The

[51] Correspondence, in IV-111-12, IV-111-13, IV-111-17, and IV-111-18 in San Antonio Consulate Files, El Acervo Histórico Diplomático de Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F.

[52] Mr Stillwell, Spear and Stillwell Ranch, November 13, 1928, in Folder 10.4, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[53] Kelly Lytle Hernandez, *Migra!: A History of the US Border Patrol* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2010), 19-44; *Mae M. Ngai, Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 60-71.

patrol deported 12,000 Mexican migrants in 1927, and many more in the years leading up to the Great Depression, over the objections of the Mexican Consulate and newspapers.[54] The Border Patrol developed a complicated relationship with growers in the borderlands, sometimes working with them to raid when it was convenient or when Mexican labor organized, but at other times raiding major operations right at peak season. Such raids might show independence from growers but ultimately serve their interest in keeping Mexicans deportable.[55] When large raids occurred, growers objected to the Bureau, but more interestingly, Mexican migrants objected to the Mexican consul and the Spanish press.

For years, Mexicans had been building an alternative set of institutions in order to respond to their needs in Texas and even provide an alternative to the U.S government in dealing with disputes. For example, in 1928, after large raids in Donna, Texas led to the deportations of hundreds of migrant workers just before the harvest,[56] Mexicans sought certification from Mexican consulates that they had been in the country for more than five years and that they were thus ineligible for deportation.[57] This campaign made it clear to migrants and Mexican authorities in San Antonio and Mexico City that US immigration authorities were using

[54] "12,000 Smuggled Aliens Captured", El Paso Times, Tuesday November 19 1927, 55598/459 in INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

[55] Mae M. Ngai, Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 131.

[56] Correspondence and news article in 55609/358 in INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

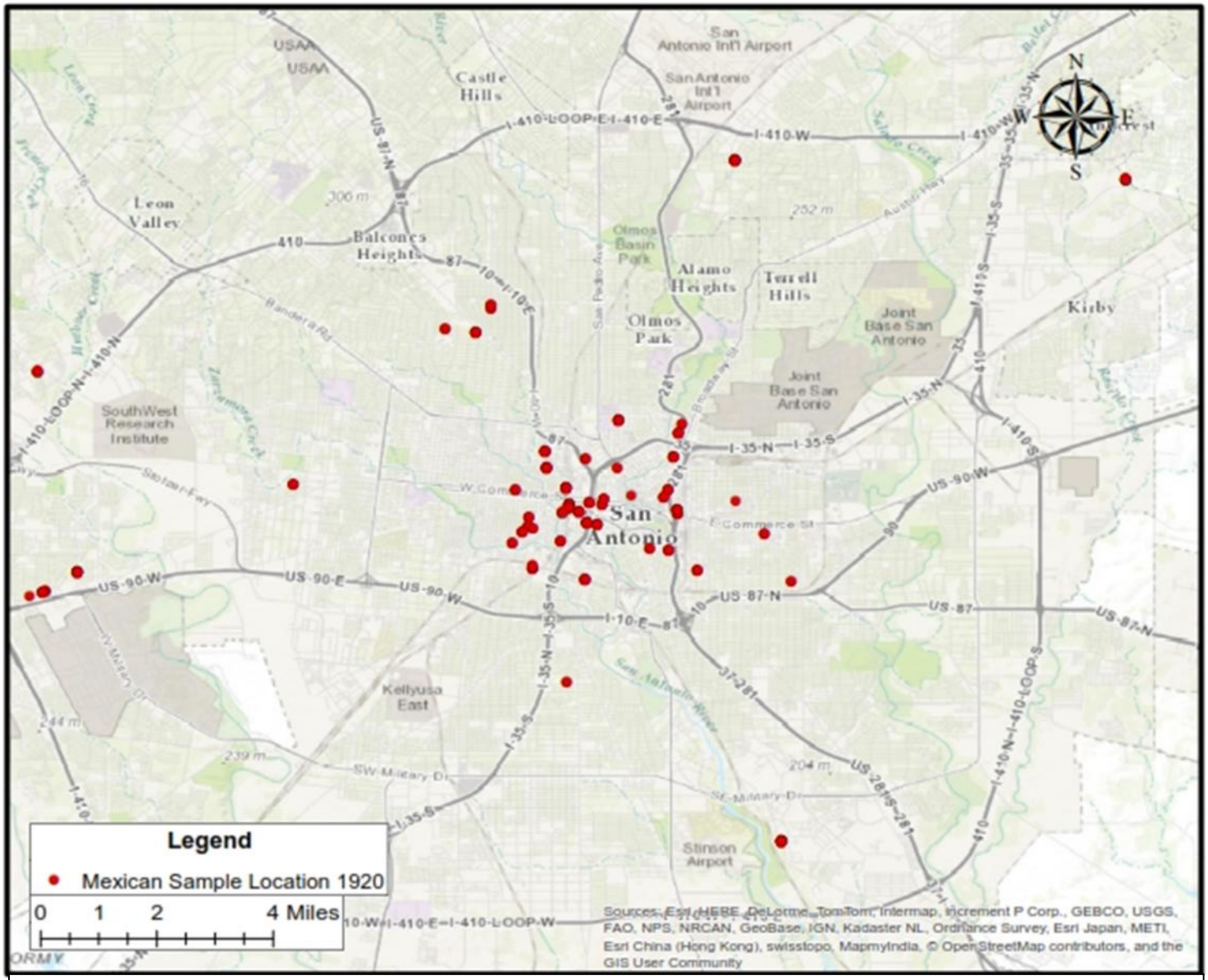
[57] 38-11-244, IV-346-51 San Antonio Consulate, El Acervo Histórico Diplomático de Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F.

enforcement of immigration laws to try to decrease the flow of migrants, achieving many of the same goals a quota would have provided.[58]

Civic Organizing in San Antonio, Texas

Though civic organizing, Mexicans created a series of social spaces that formed a public sphere to dealt with obstacles placed in their path. As the number of migrants grew, so did the communities and organizations that supported them. Some were part of labor unions, some grew organically, like the *mutualistas* that provided services from funeral and health insurance to education and cultural preservation. Others grew from commercial demand, from thousands of businesses like banking services, rickshaw buses, and boarding houses. The Spanish press arose from the exile community while other types of organizing came from direct planning by the Mexican government. It often seemed that every Mexican community of an appreciable size had a *Comisión Honorifica and Brigadas de la Cruz Azul,* which were organized by that other source of sovereign power, the Mexican government and its consulates in the U.S. While these institutions at first were meant to make life easier for migrants in Texas, they also came to serve as the primary institutions expanding the networks that people used to leave Texas in large numbers.

[58] Recortes de Prensa Sobre Inmigracion de Mexicanos, and the newspaper article AP "Quota Bill For Mexicans Held Needless," San Antonio Express, April 7 1930, IV-267-18, San Antonio Consulate El Acervo Histórico Diplomático de Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F.



Map 3.2. San Antonio was the center of Mexican life in Texas, with a large and diverse economy, easy access by rail to local agriculture and points north and south. Map by author, created April 29 2015, with data from author's *Location of Mexican Sample in San Antonio 1920*.

Historians have studied the mutualistas, documenting the ways they helped build and sustain Mexican communities across the country especially in economically.[59] Both El Paso and San Antonio had developed strong networks of mutual aid organizations, before the Great Depression, these organizations were the primary social safety net for the migrant working class. Texas had developed groups in various towns across the state, including *la Comité Patriótico Mexicano, Comité de Organización Agrícola, which focused on agricultural workers; la Comité de Beneficencia y Protección Mutual*, which helped with health benefits*; Comité de Beneficencia de San Bernardino, Comité Pro-Socorros a Mexicanos, La Sociedad Mutualista de Beaumont, la sociedad mutualista "Benevolencia Mexicana", Función Teatral a beneficio de la Clínica Mexicana,* and many more. Many organizations were names after important figures in Mexican history, such as the *Sociedad Mutualista Melchor Ocampo,* which provided death and medical benefits to its members throughout the 1920s until the 1930s.[60] Some of the largest were the *Comisión Honorificas*, and *Brigadas de las Cruz Azul*, which were organized and supported by the Mexican government to promote connection with the homeland.

These organizations were acritical links, often connected to other organizations and people and could respond to a wide range of issues, from finding housing to dealing with health issues. Many of the people who participated in these organizations also worked in labor, and later civil rights organizations, and the organizations themselves could and did become involved

[59] Emilio Zamora, *World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (Texas A&M University Press, 2000), Ch 4, 1. George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*, Reprint edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). Matt Garcia, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970*, (Chapel Hill, N.C: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002). 1. José Alamillo, *Making Lemonade out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor and Leisure in a California Town 1880-1960,* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

[60] Sociedad Mutualist Melchor Ocampo, Papers, Benson Latin American Library, University of Texas, Austin Texas

in political issues at various times. Along with the labor unions, Catholic Church, consulates, newspapers, and other organizations, they created a vibrant civic life in San Antonio, and other Mexican/Tejano communities across the state. Their efforts sustained metaphorical and physical links to Mexico, while offering practical assistance and ways to organize with others.

La Prensa of San Antonio

The Mexican Revolution propelled the transformation of a nascent Spanish language press in the US from small papers focused on the political exile community into large enterprises that were widely read and circulated. In these years Mexicans participated in the public sphere though newspapers, consuls, and local officials, which served to spread information and to appeal through the use of *Mexican* citizenship to the US government to act on their behalf. Arriving in San Antonio before the Revolution, in 1908, Ignacio Lozano worked for *El Imparcial* and founded his own paper, *La Prensa* in 1913. Covering the revolution, politics and life on both sides of the border, the paper quickly grew into the most circulated Spanish paper in the Southwest. He later moved to Los Angeles and founded *La Opinión*, arguably the most important US Spanish language publication of the 20th century. Lozano gathered a large and varied staff, employing many writers and exiles who were driven north by the revolution. These writers played a major part in creating a Spanish language public sphere in the US that would become critical in advocating for migrants and their rights in the 1920s.

La Prensa's coverage of the Mexican Revolution quickly made it important in the Southwest. There is a body of literature pertaining to *La Prensa's* ideology, particularly its concept of *México de Afuera*, the elite status of its writers, and its overall conservative vision for

Mexico and the United States. It argues for the most that the paper represented the voice of elite Mexicans rather than those of most of the Mexicans who were arriving in the US in this period.[61] This view of the paper's editorial views may be correct, but the papers' readership circulated far beyond the elite. Mexican readers took a conservative paper and used it for their own ends. The newspaper's coverage of the revolution and editorials helped it grow into the most widely read Spanish newspaper in the borderlands. However, it was the newspapers' practical influence in news reporting. The usefulness of its classifieds, its willingness to engage Mexican Consuls and American officials, and its large and varied employment section made it critical for the Mexican community in the U.S.

In addition to its coverage of events in Mexico, perhaps the newspapers' most important section was its "help wanted" advertisements that regularly listed hundreds of jobs in agriculture, railroads and other industries. As Richard García has noted:

> "If the Mexican workers could not find work in the plants or factories, they could look in the Spanish newspaper, *La Prensa* … Here they could find such jobs advertised as: 'Omaha Employment Bureau wants vegetable pickers,' 'Gouger National Bank wants 50 truckers in Robs-town,' 'Men and women with experience to sew babies' dresses in your own homes-good pay,' 'Learn to be a Barber, Lewis Barber College,' 'Wanted: strawberry pickers, Highland farms, 50 cents per box-2 months, Harris County, Texas,' 'Wanted middle-aged women for house work at the Black and White Gar- age.' If none of these suited them they could check again. This time they might find: 'Ten dancers wanted-Club Continental, See Jesse Lopez, dance every night-the new taxi dance- Women dancers 10c a dance.' 'Basila Frocks Co. 3019 Market St. Seamstress' wanted, no experience necessary" or "twenty men to sell life insurance.'" [62]

[61] Roberto R Trevino, "Prensa y Patria; The Spanish-Language Press and the Biculturation of the Tejano Middle Class, 1920-1940," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 22(1991):451; Richard A Garcia, "Class, Consciousness, and Ideology- the Mexican Community of San Antonio, Texas: 1930-1940," Aztlan 9 (1979): 4243

[62] Ibid: 47

Ads matched workers with labor agents and cotton growers, but also to new types of work and people that could lead to the formation of new networks.

San Antonio's *La Prensa* was the most widely read Spanish paper of the era. Establishing a circulation of 10,000 in its first year, the paper counted upon approximately 15,000 subscribers throughout the 1920s. Its influence however was much greater because the paper was circulated and read far beyond borderlands all the way to California and Chicago. It traveled via the Santa Fe and was spread from person to person and read in groups. Richard Savala learned to read by reading *La Prensa* every day to his father who could not read.[63] As pointed out in the first chapter, Mayers of Watkins Labor Agency saw *La Prensa* as the major source of his labor: "Many in the railroad camps subscribed; it was typical that twelve papers would be delivered to a camp of twenty-five. About twenty percent of the Mexicans take *La Prensa* in railroad camps".[64] One Mexican who worked on the Santa Fe Railroad recounted to Paul Taylor, "We get *La Prensa* here and when I finish reading it I pass it to someone else. Some of the others get papers form other places in Texas and there is one man that gets a paper from Los Angeles in California."[65]

The Mexican press in this era was read well beyond regional boundaries as railroads, and then automobiles spread its circulation far and wide. In the 1920s Manuel R Márquez traveled what he described as the entire southwest, by car and train with his wife selling subscriptions of

[63] Interview with Richard Savala, VOCES Oral History Project, University of Texas, Austin

[64] Mayers, Interview, Folder 10:5, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[65] Mexican in Manheim Camp, in Folder 11.33, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

La Prensa.[66] Manuel Gamio asked Mexicans in the southwest whether they read, and if so what they read. More often than not the answer was *La Prensa*. Francisco Mares, a miner began to read it while working as a track laborer and later a beet picker and continued to read it when he moved to Globe, Arizona.[67] Daniel Aguilar, another miner, from Chihuahua had subscriptions to both *La Prensa* of San Antonio and *El Heraldo de Mexico* of Los Angeles, even though he lived in Arizona.[68] Carlos Pérez from Guadalajara, a miner who had left his family in Torreón to earn five dollars a day in the US, also read *La Prensa* every day.[69] So did Concepción de Rodríguez, a politically active woman who had worked with Ricardo Flores Magón before the Revolution.[70] Jesus Luis Acuña read the newspaper, as did his neighbors in Tucson, Andrés Davila, and Jose M Ramirez who not only read *La Prensa* and *El Heraldo*, but *El Universal* and *Excelisco* from Mexico City.[71]

In Los Angeles, Ricardo Sotero, a migrant from Guanajuato who worked on the railroad read both *La Prensa* and the newer *La Opinión*.[72] And in Chicago, at the Puerto de Veracruz

[66] Document 44 Sr Manuel R Marquez, BANC FILM 2322 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[67] Francisco Mares from Ocamo, Zamora, Michoacán, Miami Arizona, Mayo 20 de 1927, BANC FILM 2322 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[68] Daniel Aguilar, Miami Az, Mayo 22 de 1927, BANC FILM 2322 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[69] Carlos Perez, Guadalajara, No 24, BANC FILM 2322 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[70] Sra Concepcion Vda de Rodriguez, Tuscon Az, 3 de Mayo de 1927, BANC FILM 2322 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[71] VIDAS- Jesus Luis Acuna No 12, Tuscon Arizona, Abril 28 1927; Andres Davila; Sr Jose M Ramirez, BANC FILM 2322 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[72] La Vide de Ricardo Sotero, Los Angeles CA, Abril 3 de 1927, Folder 2:15, BANC FILM 2332 REEL 2, GNEG Box 2569, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

restaurant, Taylor found several men who ordered *La Prensa* and had it sent on railroad to them across a thousand miles.[73] There were dozens of smaller newspapers in towns across the Southwest, but it was *La Prensa* that first became the voice of the community in this era, in no small part thanks to railroad workers who carried it on their travels. Taylor also found a Mexican bookstore that subscribed to *La Prensa*, *El Universal*, and other newspapers in Chicago.[74] Echoing Taylor and Gamio's results, Annie Watson, reporting in 1929 about Mexicans in St Louis and Kansas, remarked that "*La Prensa*, the Spanish newspaper published in San Antonio is read everywhere."[75] When Mexicans read the Spanish press, they seemed to be more interested in the practical benefits of the newspaper than its editor's ideology. They read *La Prensa*, *El Continental*, or other newspapers, to get the latest news on the Mexican Revolution, to see who was hiring in various industries and states, to see which families were searching for people in the US, to see what was being sold and to see what services *mutualistas* were offering. *La Prensa* served as a critical link between migrants in far flung communities across the Southwest and even parts of the Midwest.

[73] Puerto de Veracruz, Restuant, Chicago, June 2 1928, in Folder 11.33, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[74] Bookstore, South Chicago, July 19, 1928, in Folder 11.33, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[75] Annie Cloe Watson, "Mexican Families in Transit North Through Inland Port of San Antonio", International Institute, YWCA, San Francisco 1929 in Folder 5 of National Conferences of Social Work Records 1929, Box 1 in the University of Chicago, Special Collections, Chicago Ill.

The Mexican Consulate

During the 1920s, Mexican and Mexican-American communities in the United States became thoroughly dominated by migrants who came after 1910. In San Antonio, Mexican migrants arriving after the Mexican Revolution dwarfed the Texas-born *Tejano* population of the city and came to constitute the majority of the city's 60,000 ethnically Mexican population. With a large skilled and white collar workforce, the city was a large manufacturing center and a destination for migrants in its own right. However, it was also the center of agricultural recruiting with railroad links across the state and beyond.[76] In this context, the Mexican consulates in El Paso and San Antonio took an important role in the community. Providing a forum to get access to the community, jobs, healthcare, legal and financial help, the consuls made it possible for people to travel and maintain a semblance of institutions and community while far from home. Mexican migrants felt comfortable asking for services and information and expected the consuls to take their side in disputes. When this was not the case, they were not shy to criticize them in writing and in the Spanish press. They used their Mexican citizenship as a source of power to counter U.S. institutions and racism.

Several scholars have studied the role of Mexican consulates in the pre-*Bracero* era and have come to the general conclusion that the consuls were more preoccupied with the Mexican Government's interests rather than those of Mexican nationals living in the U.S.[77] On one level this is certainly true, as the consulates sought to organize the community along collectivist-nationalist lines loyal to the government in Mexico City. On the other hand, consulates in the

[76] Rodolfo Acuna, By Rodolfo Acuna Occupied America: A History of Chicanos (Longman, 2006), 152.

[77] Gilbert G. González, *Mexican Consuls and Labor Organizing: Imperial Politics in the American Southwest* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999).

U.S. did not ignore their compatriots' concerns as much as has been alleged. Even as individual consuls had their own agenda, the office itself, especially the *Departamento de Protección* in each consulate, was critical in helping Mexican migrants' day to day concerns. The consuls themselves were well aware of the Spanish press and responded to pressure from migrants to involve themselves in labor, political, and immigration disputes.[78]

The consulates at San Antonio and El Paso were among the largest in the country. While few records dealing with consul-migrant relations exist for the period before the Mexican revolution, extensive records are available from the early 1920s going forward at the *Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores*. For migrant communities, it was the *Departamento de Proección's* work on behalf of migrants, resisting deportations, connecting family members, and dealing with American authorities, that made the consulate relevant in their daily lives.[79] While various aspects of this work presented consuls with opportunities to promote the Mexican government's agenda, the vast majority of the work was non-ideological and put the Mexican government on the same side as migrants.[80]

The consulate's work promoting *mutualistas* has drawn the most attention from scholars, who have argued that their promotions of elite organizations, especially the *Comisión*

[78] Consulates routinely sent reports to the SRE about their activities relations with the community, Texas authorities, and the state of the mutualistas. An example of this can be round at Informes de Labores del Consulado en San Antonio, IV-15-8, San Antonio Consulate, El Acervo Histórico Diplomático de Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F.

[79] The type of work done is outlined in the newspaper article, "El Paso and New York Most Important Consulate Posts of Mexico in the U.S.; Advantages Outlined By Consul Ruiz", Interview of Enrique D. Ruiz Consul General, The El Paso Herald, October 13-14, 1923 in 38-22-178, El Paso Consulate, El Acervo Histórico Diplomático de Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F.

[80] The San Antonio, and Los Angeles consulates sent monthly reports to the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores with summaries of the cases they dealt with each month, for San Antonio, many of these can be found in Box IV-73, Protección a Mexicanos del Consulado en San Antonio, El Acervo Histórico Diplomático de Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F.

Honoríficas, did not help the majority of migrants. The *Comisión Honoríficas* were set up by the consulates in hundreds of communities along the borderlands; their boards usually consisted of the most successful Mexicans in town.[81] Their work was a mixture of cultural festivities, educational concerns such as building schools, relief work for Mexicans in need, and in the 1930s organizing repatriation drives. The *Brigadas de la Cruz Azul Mexicanas*, on the other hand, dealt almost exclusively with medical care, creating a system of clinics across the Southwest that was the primary source of healthcare for the Mexican migrant community in these years.[82] Gilbert González has argued that these two groups of organizations were the vanguard of *Mexico de Afuera*, sharing close relationships with consulates and the Mexican government. Along with various Mexican unions, and other groups, they created an infrastructure that sought to keep Mexican the migrants' loyalty and identity firmly rooted with the Mexican government and its revolution.[83]

The close relationship that these organizations held with consulates was not simply a matter of promoting Mexican identity. Before the Great Depression, these voluntary organizations were the primary social safety net for most working-class people. Like their European immigrant counterparts in the northeast and Midwest, Mexicans in the United States developed a large web of overlapping institutions to deal with the uncertainties of the labor

[81] For reports on the establishment of Comisión Honorífcas in across Texas, see Box IV-100, San Antonio Consulate, El Acervo Histórico Diplomático de Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F.

[82] For reports on the establishment of Brigadas de la Cruz Azul in small towns, see: Informes Sobre Sociedades Felentropicas Mexicanas, 38-11-244, Box IV-100, and 6-13-70, Consulates routinely sent reports to the SRE about their activities relations with the community, Texas authorities, and the state of the mutualistas. An example of this can be round at Informes de Labores del Consulado en San Antonio, IV-15-8, San Antonio Consulate, El Acervo Histórico Diplomático de Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F.

[83] Ibid Ch. 1 & 2

market.[84] But even though these institutions often did critical work, they were never very stable or secure. Most faced high rates of member turnover, could barely afford to pay benefits during normal times, and a high percentage of them failed once economic crisis began in 1930. Thus, it made perfect sense for migrants to seek help from the consuls, who could bring influence, money, and attention to *mutualistas*. More to the point, the vast majority of the work of these organizations consisted of helping people who were poor, setting up schools and fighting school discrimination, and organizing cultural activities. People went to these organizations in order to solve problems, and most consuls honestly sought to help them.

The consuls were also among the largest conduits of economic transactions across a transnational community of people continuously moving back and forth across the border. Some of this involved remittances: the consuls worked to publicize fraud and abuses by unscrupulous agents and promoted the U.S. Savings Bank and other local banks and savings collectives, like the *Sociedad de Credito Agricola de la Paz* in Rio Hondo Texas, which were also organized by the *Comisión Honoríficas*.[85] The consuls also assisted the business dealings of Mexicans who sent goods or capital to Mexico. Most of the consuls' work however involved transmitting modest payments to Mexico. The consul kept track of accidents and deaths in the Mexican community and sought compensation from corporations, insurance companies, and *mutualistas* when these events occurred.[86] Often the beneficiaries were in Mexico and could not be easily

[84] Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*, (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[85] Visita a las Comisiones Honorificas en Charlotte y Rondo, Texas, IV-100-30, San Antonio Consulate, El Acervo Histórico Diplomático de Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F.

[86] For the El Paso Consulate, Box VI-82 is almost entirely these types of files. El Acervo Histórico Diplomático de Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F.

found or needed translation and other types of help. In these cases, the consulate took the lead in providing support to make these transactions possible. The consul found people, placing ads in newspapers such as *La Prensa* and *La Opinión*; it inquired into cases and pressured firms into paying what was due; and it communicated with families in Mexico throughout the process. Combined, the consuls in the U.S. handled approximately a thousand such cases per month.

One of the most common ways that Mexicans used the consulates in El Paso and San Antonio was to respond to American authorities, especially with regard to deportations and arrests. When Mexicans were arrested and charged with crimes, many turned to the consulate for help. Consuls checked on cases and kept track of the prisons holding Mexican nationals were so they could communicate with their family members. While many Mexicans who were deported did not contest the proceedings and left "voluntarily," those who had been in the U.S. for a long time often fought their deportation and went to the consulate for help. In addition to providing paper work to help prove their legal or long residency, consulates also helped people gather testimony. Petra Moreno was one such case. After her husband died she had no intention of returning to Mexico and fought an attempt to deport her because she had resorted to public charity, and thus could be deported as LPC, by arguing that she had had an employer since 1922 and had been in the country continuously since 1920. In another case, Jesus Aguilar came with his family in 1920 under contract during the wartime exemption but decided to stay. They applied for residency but had not heard back when they were arrested for deportation. They

appealed to the consul and received help, though it is unclear if they were successful. The deportation files are filled with similar cases.[87]

Not only did migrants see the consulates as a source of help, they saw themselves as a constituency entitled to representation. Many came to see the consulate as a source of power that could counter American institutions, whether local farmers or the Federal government. When there were immigration raids, the consulate was inundated with requests by families, criticism in the press, and general pressure to respond. The same was true when companies laid off large groups of workers, or cheated migrants of their wages, or when Mexicans were mistreated by local authorities. When Mexicans contracted to work for Kink & Monahans oil fields were chased away by angry local residents, they appealed to the consulate and *La Prensa* for help.[88] Migrants could also organize protests against the city and the consulate when they believed they had not done enough, in April of 1930 a coalition of radical groups called for a march of the unemployed in San Antonio to demand work. For days leading to the march the Mexican consul Enrique Santibañez worried about communists and other participants, fearing that the march would turn against the consulate. Eventually extra protection was declined by city authorities, and the march proceeded peacefully. Two thousand people participated with most of the protesters were Mexican migrants although, with European migrants and some American-born

[87] Mexicanos Deportados, Consulado en San Antonio, IV-346-51, Box IV-345, San Antonio Consulate, El Acervo Histórico Diplomático de Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F.

[88] Contractos a Mexicanos Para Trabajar, IV-76-31, El Paso Consulate Files, El Acervo Histórico Diplomático de Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F.

workers swelling their ranks, making demands from local, state and Mexican authorities to provide jobs.[89]

Neither Mexican migrants nor the Spanish language press were afraid of telling the consulates exactly what they thought and expected of them. Consulates usually held subscriptions to the major newspapers, and regularly sent articles from *La Prensa, La Opinión, El Continental*, and others back to Mexico City for response from the *Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores*. They often responded to criticism and news in the press and letters from migrants who would criticize their actions. When workers were denied a local school and chapel at McNary Texas, and had a dollar deducted from their wages, they refused to work and let *El Continental* know. As a result of the press coverage, the consulate sent an investigator and intermediary.[90] In another case the consulates began to alert the *Secretaria de Relaciones* about overcrowding at border cities because of deportations but only after *La Prensa* began to run articles on the issue.[91]

The simple act of providing paper work was one of the most critical for Mexican migrants, especially when confronting U.S. authorities. The consulate sought to keep registrations of all migrants, from births certificates to death certificates, departures, marriages, and other records, though for the most part migrants did not bother to obtain these documents

[89] Manifestacion de los sin trabajo en el Consulado en San Antonio, IV-260-36, San Antonio Consulate, El Acervo Histórico Diplomático de Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F.

[90] "1929, Maltrato a Mexicanos residentes en McNary, Texas" IV-75-26, El Paso Consulate, El Acervo Histórico Diplomático de Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F.

[91] "Se Pide Ayuda para los compatriotas deportados, que estan en la Miseria en varias ciudades de la frontera" La Prensa July 28, 1930, IV-256-1, San Antonio Consulate, El Acervo Histórico Diplomático de Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F.

unless there was material benefit to doing so.[92] Throughout this period consuls responded to requests from thousands of people who needed documents in order to migrate, from Mexico to the United States and back.[93] In the late 1920s the consuls noticed when American consulates began to change their procedures to exclude more people from entry. The Mexican consulate in the U.S. responded by first objecting and then by instructing Mexicans exactly how the new harder procedures worked.[94] Once American authorities began to deport Mexicans in large numbers, the most important document a migrant could obtain was the Certificate of Residence, which verified how long a person had been in the country. This allowed people to either challenge a deportation if they had been in the county for four years or more, or for those who were going back to Mexico, allowed them to take personal items back to Mexico duty free, so long as they had been in the country for six months. Requests for these certificates increased from 1929 onwards, as the deportation campaign in Texas became more heated and joined with the repatriation drives in the 1930s. In deportation proceedings, those who were legal residents used Certificates of Residency as evidence of their right to stay in the country, if they had come before 1921. The consulate ran a public campaign to encourage people to legalize their status if they could do so, giving speeches and handing out fliers at *mutualistas* and events across the state.[95]

[92] Informes de Labores del Consulado en San Antonio, IV-15-8, San Antonio Consulate, El Acervo Histórico Diplomático de Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F.

[93] El Paso and San Antonio Consulate, El Acervo Histórico Diplomático de Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F.

[94] "1929, Sobre Requisitos a inmigrantes Mexicanos", IV-89-3, El Paso Consulate Files, El Acervo Histórico Diplomático de Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F.

[95] 1931, IV-346-51 Mexicanos Deportados, San Antonio Consulate Files, El Acervo Histórico Diplomático de Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F.

Because the Mexican consulates in the United States sought to promote the Mexican government's interest in working with the United States, at times they agreed with U.S. migration policy while at the same time fighting for every right that Mexicans in the U.S. could legally claim. This led them to discourage people from going to work in the U.S. and promote personal responsibility in obeying U.S. laws. The consulate printed circulars on both sides of the border, telling Mexicans about problems they might encounter and warning them that "*debe reconocer que lo ha hecho por su propia voluntad y que el es el unico responsible de lo que le pueda acontecer*," (that they alone would be responsible for what happened to them in the U.S.).[96] They also ran a campaign through the *Comisión Honorífcas* where they gave presentations on people's legal rights. Consul Enrique Santibanes' tenure in San Antonio in particular was marked by an aggressive effort, by which he and others went to communities and gave talks about obeying laws and what to do if they found themselves in trouble.[97]

By dealing with cases that arose in the local context of Texas, the Mexican consuls in the borderlands made transnational migration possible. While the consulate and Mexican government sought to promote *Mexicanidad*, a general concept that encompasses the belief that Mexicans in the United States should look to Mexico for political, cultural and social identity. Mexican migrants saw themselves as constituents entitled to rights as Mexican nationals and used the consulates for their own ends, especially as an alternative source of power to counter U.S. federal and state authorities. As a result, the vast majority of the work the consulates did

1931, IV-346-51 Mexicanos Deportados,

[96] Circular, Repatracion de Mexicanos, Consulado en San Antonio, IV-107-94, San Antonio Consulate, El Acervo Histórico Diplomático de Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F.

[97] An example of this can be found at, Visita del Consul a Dallas, IV-99-36; Visitas a colonias mexicanas, BOX IV-100, San Antonio Consulate, El Acervo Histórico Diplomático de Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F.

was non-ideological casework, in which they acted as conduits for information, as a resource for those in need of assistance, and as an outside power to appeal to U.S. authorities. Despite the consuls' larger ideological agenda, much like the newspapers, migrants generally used the consuls primarily for their practical value, to deal with crises', and their material concerns on the ground.

The Public Sphere

Together, the Spanish language press, and the Mexican consulates sustained a public sphere in San Antonio. Throughout this period, Mexicans and Mexican-American Tejanos were systematically excluded from power, from the cultural and political life of public institutions ranging from labor unions to the political parties, to the English language press. In most of Texas Mexicans and Tejanos lived under a Jim-crow system, excluded from schools, public facilities, businesses, neighborhoods, and the court system. When Mexicans and Tejanos were unpaid, injured, discriminated against, or even killed, the local police, Texas Rangers, the local political system, not to mention the English press, did not respond to their pleas, and may have even been the perpetrators. While LULAC and other Mexican-American civil rights organizations started in the 1920's, founded by returning veterans, most of the population before the Great Depression was born in Mexico and did not have citizenship. Instead Mexicans turned to their own communities, to their own experience, and the Mexican government for assistance. As a result, what arose was a method by which people used their Mexican citizenship as a basis of rights.

Mexicans used the Spanish language public sphere to find a way around unresponsive US institutions. The civic life of Mexican communities, from *mutualistas*, unions, schools and

churches, to newspapers and consulates created a space that was able to not only solve problems but create a discourse that American and Mexican institutions had to respond to. The Spanish language newspapers extensively covered how communities were disenfranchised, discriminated against, targeted for violence and deportation, when it was done by private and state institutions. The attention they brought to stories sometimes forced authorities to start investigations or intervene, and at least forced growers and state officials to defend themselves.

The consulates acted to protect members of the community, not so much because of their own benevolence but because of pressure from Mexicans and newspapers which criticized their actions if they did not. Officials in the Mexican government were very concerned with how they were perceived in the Spanish press and not only read what people said about them in the press but sent it to Mexico City. The consulates intervened to protect Mexican citizens in the US, and always insisted that they should be treated like anyone else in the country. They showed up in court to defend Mexican citizens, angering judges, including one who tried to have the consul arrested. In some cases they managed to get the Federal government and the State Department involved, especially when the injustice was particularly egregious. Only some of these cases were effective, most were not, but at a time when there were few options to address wrongs, this was an invaluable strategy Mexican migrants used.

Mexican Migrants and Growers in the Fields

By the 1920s, there were hundreds of thousands of Mexican migrants in Texas. Most of these did not work in cities or for industry. They worked instead in the cotton and vegetable fields of Texas where agribusiness and growers sought a landless, rootless, legally and politically

excluded, and deportable yet stable work force. Growers sought a cheap workforce of migratory laborers that would not put down roots and stay, but would also not leave permanently returning after year. While agricultural interests, along with other political interests, could usually secure the backing of the federal government, the power of the border patrol, the state legislature, and local officials, was ultimately checked by economics. There was no getting around the fact that Mexicans were free laborers, having come of their own volition for wages. They could and did use this fact to make claims upon employers and government. Though every day actions, organizing and making use of institutions, information and resources they showed that they could negotiate social-economic conditions and, if need be, go elsewhere. And leave they did. By the mid-1920s Mexicans were leaving in droves from the fields and the state for industries in other states, especially to the Midwest and California. Interviews and writings by both farmers and migrants make clear the contours of this back and forth negotiation of power and action.

Conditions were not good for cotton pickers in Texas where wages could go as low as 75 cents a day and rarely topped 2 dollars a day. For the most part workers remained around a dollar a day in the 1910s and a dollar and fifty cents a day through most of the 1920s. While many migrants organized and participated in direct actions and strikes, the costs of such actions were too high for most. Much more common were day-to-day actions such as work stoppages, slowdowns, weighing down the bags with heavy objects and the like. However, the most common response was simply to protest with their feet and leave. With wages in the field declining, few workers would accept such conditions year after year, especially as information began to travel about alternatives. In one case at the Coleman-Fulton Pasture Company, the Mexican workforce walked off the job when they were refused a fifteen-cent increase in the

picking rate. The superintendent recounted, “They said if we didn’t pay them they would go where they could get it, and my man told them to go, and they went.”[98]

Mexicans regarded the availability of transportation, especially the automobile, as a key to greater mobility and a better life. Not surprisingly growers’ viewed the coming of automobiles as a threat to their control of labor. L. A Ethridge, a Texas grower, saw them and single migrants as undermining his control, “all the miners have cars, some have two or three, but very few save. The singles won't stay. We have only families. The ranchers have bunk houses and want solos."[99] Jeffery, a farmer in Carrizo Springs believed that, “now the Mexicans drift around more than they used to because they have autos," which he saw as a major problem.[100] Louis Baily explained why he controlled his workers movement and housing, “I advanced $200 to pay rent in San Antonio and other expenses to bring Mexicans down here. I lost about 3 per cent. Last Saturday I received $140. If the Mexicans have their own transportation they leave to move too much."[101] P. Butts, explained that, “some pick and then go back. Some pick a week and move on. The Mexicans own cars that is one thing that causes trouble. They are independent and always wanting something better.”[102]

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[98] Comsion on industrial Relations, Final Report, 10:9258, originally in Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (Texas A&M University Press, 1993): pg 67

[99] L. A. Ethridge, Micolith, Texas- sixteen miles south of Van Horn, Texas Nov 25, 1928 in Folder 10.4, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[100] Farmer Jeffry, Carrizo Springs, in Folder 10.4, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[101] Louis Baily, Farmer Near Agua Dulce in Folder 10.7, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[102] P Butts, Bishop, Texas, August, 1929, in Folder 10.7, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

Maston Nixon, a grower near Corpus Cristi, expressed the opinion of many growers when he spoke to Taylor in 1929: “We wish to prevent the transportation of Mexicans where they don't belong. Though employment agencies he gets to where he has no business, where he gets in competition with union labor.” When asked about the debate over whether to restrict Mexican migration, he expressed his confidence that “Congress does not care so much if we keep them here so our first step was to make it as hard as possible for Heckman and Maddux [two employers who had been recruiting agricultural workers] to get labor. The Box Bill is practically in effect now. The $18 head tax forces the Mexicans to resort to illegal entry. There was no inspection and we got boll worms, disease, etc. What we must have is a fix or four months’ agricultural passports with a $1 fee.” Asked by Taylor if this did not amount to a peonage system, he answered apparently without irony, “Peonage? But agricultural offers a man work in a variety of trades, driving a tractor and other things. It isn't peonage in the true sense. The penalty for running off would be denial of permission to return to the United States if he violated his passport.”[103]

Mexican migrants saw automobiles differently. The ability to move was critical in the long journey to better conditions. While conditions were not always be easy in the north, they were better than in Texas. Augustine Martinez fondly remembered going north. He had come to the US as a child with his parents and extended family and spent his childhood in the cotton fields, “We were poor," "you were born in a chicken coop" his father told him; "in those days you picked cotton for ten cents" everything was just cheap, they don’t pay you nothing”. And then his dad saw a big flyer circulated in Texas, “BIG MONEY BIG MONEY! You know and

[103] Maston Nixon, CC, August 19, 1929, in Folder 10.7, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

still they didn't make any money, so here we go, lets go. 18-19 dollars an acre, that was sugar beets. … we landed in North Dakota, it was cold." They settled in St Paul Minnesota and "then my brother got a city job and my dad started working for the railroad and we moved again. And then he started to work more. "By that time we had a little bit more, even a car!"[104]

Cotton growers in Texas and Arizona viewed the exodus in very much the same way their counterparts in Mississippi and Georgia did, as the result of a plot by unscrupulous agents and dishonest competitors. If they thought the Mexicans had chosen it themselves they believed it was the result of greed or pretension. Many Mexicans left suddenly, sneaking away in the night lest the grower use unpaid debt as an excuse to call authorities. Leaving without paying all debts either to the grower or the company store was a power workers held to get back at unscrupulous employers and their store monopolies.

This did not please farmers. P. Butts complained that, "we have to pay their debts in the valley before they come and their transportation and advance groceries. Some pay but others don't. I used to lose several hundred dollars a year. Once fourteen Mexicans left me the first night they came. So I don't get young bucks anymore. Now we get families."[105] W.C. Hatter, a school superintendent, spoke for the farmers when he recounted, "I know one farmer who lost $600 trying to get Mexicans across the river. I know one Mexican family which went off owing a farmer $60. This year the farmers lost less because more Mexicans came in under their own power. They have to advance to 99 percent of the Mexicans. If the regular Mexican is on good terms with the boss, he will tell him if the other pickers start to leave without paying… the

[104] 383 Augustine Martinez, VOCES Oral History Project, University of Texas, Austin

[105] P Butts, Bishop, Texas, August, 1929, in Folder 10.7, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

Mexicans may leave without telling you. They will sometimes get one farmers to pay their debts to another in order to enable them to move. If he did not the farmer might take a club to him. The farmer just gets mad."[106]

Other growers attempted to enforce their own law to keep labor, working with local police, hiring their own men, and even working with other workers. Henry Baldwin confidently told Taylor that his labor could not leave, when asked why he answered, "How do I know if the Mexicans won't leave? Have a regular Mexican [Mexican-American] to watch them. If the cotton pickers to whom I advance started to move one of my regular Mexicans would get my foreman out of bed and he would talk to them or threaten them or do anything else to keep them from moving off."[107]

While many farmers tried to tie Mexicans to the land with debt, others claimed a delicate balance between credit and cash was more advantageous. Mr. Wilkinson claimed that "the farmer stands good for so much provisions at the store. He doesn't want him to spend too much because then he may get discouraged and quit. But if he gets too much cash at the end of the year he may buy a car and quit." He also lamented the passing of the old days when policemen, enforcing very strong vagrancy laws, "used to ask the Mexicans if they were working. If they would not work they would throw them in jail."[108] After speaking with various farmers about their strategies to keep Mexicans on land, (even the supposedly better conditions of

[106] WC Hatter; Superintendent of Schools, Banquete, Texas, in Folder 10.4, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[107] Henry Baldwin; Guarantee Title Company, Corpus Crisit, in in Folder 10.7, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[108] Mr Wilkinson, Country Agricultural Agent, Kleberg County, Kingville Texas, in Folder 10.4, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

sharecroppers and tenants who worked on half seem more designed to keep the hope alive of better conditions than to realize them), Paul Taylor came to the opinion that "the primary purpose of maintaining Mexican share-croppers on halves is to immobilize them so that ample labor will be on hand though the year and a large nucleus to start the picking season."[109]

Mexicans often pointed to discrimination and low pay in Texas as reasons why they went north. Sr. Villarreal was living in Texas when he told Taylor that "half a dozen Mexicans from here have been to Detroit. They come back here because of their families. Some go to Mississippi to pick cotton from here. Those who go to north Texas say they get better treatment and the Americans come to their dances."[110] Sr. Másquez who was working on Byrd ranch in Texas in 1928 agreed with the assessment, "Went to Colombia sugar beets at Mt Pleasant, Michigan. [I] like Michigan. They treat you equal there, but not here. Here there are so many without education who aren't equal. They can't explain for themselves. I have been here four years and expect to go back to Mexico to live."[111] Another Mexican in Chicago recalled, "I worked in Texas for a while and there the Texans were bad. I have seen many people treat Mexicans bad but they are the worst of all. Whenever I was out on the range riding bareback, they stopped us, asked me who I was, where I lived, where I worked, and if I did not answer fast enough they hit me with the whip. I did not like that and hated them for it. I had no gun or would have killed some, sometimes the way treated me and the way I felt. … I left Texas because it was

[109] Paul Taylor, *An American-Mexican Frontier: Nueces Country Texas* (Russell & Russell, 1934): 121

[110] The Villarreal family, in Folder 10.5, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[111] Masquez, Mexican on Byrd Ranch, in Folder 10.7, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

hard life there and came to Chicago. I came by working on the different railroad sections from that state here."[112]

A Mexican man from Michoacán who used family connections to come to the Texas cotton fields spoke about his time north, "We shipped to Billings, Montana. We left there in December, 1924 after working for the Great Western Sugar Company. I would like to stay there, but it was too cold for my mother… after leaving Montana we came to Casper, Wyoming, and worked in beets at Douglas in the summer. We had no work in the winter. We left there in September 1926. The Holly Sugar Company asked us if we wanted a Montana farm but we said it was too cold. We came to Denver for the winter. In the summer we went to work in the Colorado beets. In 1927 we came out with $15 and an old car to Raton, New Mexico…. [where he found work in a mine] …The foreman was afraid we were strikers from Colorado [and he was let go]. In November 1928 we left the mine and started to Texas. When we got to Littlefield, Texas, we had only $10 so we worked in cotton for a month. Then we came to Brundidge in January." He then asked his Mexican friends for information about work and found work for $2 a day, low compared to his previous jobs but higher than many Mexicans in Texas. In Montana and Wyoming, he was offered a house by the company if he would stay but turned it down, even if that meant it would be much harder to get his siblings a good education, "Texas is not like the other states. At Bermuda they told us we could not go to the American school, but that we could go to Carrizo. We will go to the cotton and make enough to send the children to school. Most parents here say that their children don't need school and of course no children like school. I

[112] Mexicans at the Employment Office in Chicago, in Folder 11.33, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

would like to keep my brothers in school."[113] His journey shows many of the competing motivations migrants had to balance as they moved from one place to another.

Workers continued to press for better conditions, whether by staging wildcat strikes or by simply walking away when their demands were not met. Farmers, unable to comprehend the idea of assertive workers, resorted to nationalistic and racist explanations for this behavior. But the workers' behavior was fairly logical. Once new workers understood how to get access to the networks of jobs and information, poorly paid jobs lost all appeal, so migrants used pressure to strike for higher wages. One farmer told Paul Taylor that Mexicans "will all sit down in the field, and not work if they hear somebody is paying a couple of cents more."[114] Another told him that "The Texas-Mexicans and Old Mexicans work different. Texas-Mexicans don't work as good. They strike, they don't like the water, etc" and another feared that once Americanized they would strike; "The Mexicans always strike. Every Monday morning, they want to know if they aren't going to raise their price. They have anarchists-agitators- who go around and tell them what price to pick for…. They are highly sensitive and will leave you if you show you are dissatisfied. They will leave without a dime, and with no place to go."[115] Workers went on strike to raise their wages because they knew they had an advantage in a fluid labor market. Despite the belief that Mexican workers constituted an inexhaustible supply of cheap surplus labor that could be controlled by farmers, workers could and did change their conditions. Farmers needed labor

[113] Mexican from Michoacán, Bermuda Texas, April, 24, 1929 in Folder 10.5, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[114] Paul Schuster Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States: Vol. I-[*III, No. 1-10] (University of California Press, 1928), 346.

[115] Ibid. 139

during picking season and could be pressed for higher wages, a fact workers knew well and did not hesitate to use to their advantage.

Many migrants who had worked in cotton eventually moved to the Midwest. One man who had migrated in 1921 told Taylor in 1929 in Chicago, “He [had] worked in Texas in cotton and at Sterling, Colorado and in Minnesota in sugar beets. He contracted twenty acres [of sugar beets]. He says he is going back to Mexico "poco tiempo" but will return to the US. He liked to go to the beet fields and may go this year. He has worked in Erie, Pennsylvania in steel. He also worked in St. Louis in steel."[116] Another, living in Chicago in 1928 came north after hearing of good jobs in the north, “I came to the US five years ago. From Texas I came to KC and hearing there was plenty of work in Chicago I came here. My first job was a porter in a good apartment home on the north side. I have been always able to find work and have worked.” [117]

The Midwest did not have the extremes of racism and segregation or the labor controls that were often seen in Texas. Alvaro Ruís, a Mexican who was also a labor contractor in Texas explained to Taylor the difficulty he faced in competition for workers with the north, “The Mexicans who go to the interior of the United States talk about what they get. They say they make $5 a day, like at the rubber factory in Akron Ohio. They say the American people give them better trade and *refrescos* but no distinction… one Mexican in the onion gang was from Guanajuato. He said that he was going to Chicago soon to work for Illinois Steel for the first time. He was going with friends who had been there before. He says that first Mexicans from his

[116] Mexicans at David Park playground in Chicago, March 1929, in Folder 10.5, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[117] La Polleria Resurant, Chicago Jun 2 1928 in Folder 11.33, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

hacienda went to the United States eighteen years ago in 1911 to Kansas City and St Louis on the railroads."[118]

A man who came to San Antonio during the war time peak, when he could make $3 every two weeks, came back to Texas in 1922, "I headed for the cotton fields but now they were only paying 60 cents a *quinta*. So I decided to come north… There was an *enganchista* in Fort Worth that signed me up. I came to work for the Inland Steel Company [in Indiana]. I arrived here early in 1923. The Mexicans were not many then. More came later in the year and they have been coming ever since. Now they come direct from Mexico, friends, send for them."[119] His observations fit the pattern of many who came to the Midwest, recruited by an agent of a specific company, only to plant new links in the network that would make it easier for other Mexicans to come without agents in later years. Migration was almost never a one-way street and many who went to north found their way back to Texas and back again. Sr. Saballo who had created a boarding house with his wife in Gary Indiana had originally started in Texas. At the start of the Mexican Revolution he had come to Laredo, "I worked here for a while and then came on to San Antonio…After that I went to Fort Worth, then Dallas…from Dallas I sold what little I had and went to the cotton fields. It paid well but did not last a long time. Since then I have spent most of my time on the track. But before that I went to Morenci Arizona and worked for in the copper mines. There are many Mexican laborers there now I hear. … from the mines I went to work on the track at Des Moines Iowa. Later I worked in the [railroad] roundhouse… seven years ago I

[118] Alvaro Ruis, Contractor, Ehler Brother Ranch, April 20, 1929 in Folder 10.5, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[119] "Man who was waiting for the Ice Man" in Folder 11.33, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

came to Gary, I had $600 in the bank then. I went to work in the steel mills and boarded out. … four years ago I had a chance to get up a boarding house of my own and took it."[120]

For many Mexican migrants, time in the fields in cotton or other crops was part of life as a migrant worker but their true destination remained Mexico, even if some never did go back. Graciola Camacho from Sinaloa told Taylor that he "Has been six years in the US First came to Yuma Arizona to pick cotton, in response to letters of friends stating there was good work there. After working a couple of years work in Yuma, came to Seeley via a ten day trip to LA," where he leased his own operation, and planned to go back to Sinaloa one day soon.[121] Antonio Mijares likewise told Taylor that he "came to the US from Durango in 1915. He likes San Antonio, Texas. He has worked in Texas picking cotton, in California picking cotton and melons in Imperial Valley, picking grapes near Stockton, worked sugar beets in Montana and as a cowboy in Montana for one and one half years. Worked on the railroad in North Dakota, worked in beets in Colorado and worked in California in the Argonaut mine. His partner came from Chihuahua only five years ago. He rented land [in Chihuahua] and will go back."[122]

[120] Mr Saballo, Gary Indiana, in Folder 11.33, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[121] Graciola Camacho, McCabe Night School, in Folder 13, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[122] C-22 Antonio Mijares, in Folder 12, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

Migration in the Borderlands

By 1930 the migratory flows had changed. A stream that began primarily flowing into Texas had split into two different currents. Migrants from the interior of Mexico had built networks that allowed them to go directly into the interior of the United States. Texas was no longer a worthwhile destination for many people. Some of the reasoning for this was economic, for the type of circular migration they came to practice was a better fit for California and the Midwest. For the most part, however, growers in Texas discouraged freedom of movement and the search for higher wages that many sought. Their continual migration back into Mexico and back frustrated Texas farmers, even if it did not lead to higher pay or better conditions.

It is important to look at the economic advantages that came from the two different migrant streams that emerged by 1930. While they can be broken down into a migration out of Northern Mexico and a migration out of the central plain states, there was always a lot of overlap between the different trends. The Mexicans who lived and worked in Texas were for the most part from the states immediately south of the border. Between 1926 and 1932 nearly half (49%) of all migrants going back to Mexico came from Texas, with the majority of the remainder coming from neighboring Southwestern states. Of the Mexicans in Texas in 1930, 80% came from Nuevo León, Coahuila, Tamaulipas and Chihuahua. This is very different from the rest of the US, where the majority of those repatriating from the Midwest and California came from the western and central plain states of Michoacán, Jalisco, Guanajuato, San Luis Potosí, and Aguascalientes. Only 13% of those repatriating from Texas came from the central states.[123]

[123] Paul Taylor, Mexican Labor in the United States Migration Statistics III, V 12 (University of California Press, 1928-1932)

Findings in chapter 2 also indicated that people in Texas came back to Mexico at lower rates than those in other parts of the United States. However, the vast majority of people interviewed in the Midwest seem to have spent some time in Texas. This implies that people from central Mexico were dissatisfied with their opportunities in Texas and sought better work elsewhere. Those in the Midwest were younger, more male, and sent more remittances per person than those from Texas.[124]

Those who primarily stayed in Texas on the other hand were older, tended to have larger families, sent fewer remittances back, and had shorter stays in the United States according to Taylor's estimates.[125] This makes sense given the close proximity of Texas and the states of northern Mexico. A trip could take just a few days, so people could go back and forth with relative ease. A strong seasonal circulatory migration arose between Northern Mexico and Texas, and the vast majority of migrants who went to the US from this region returned to Mexico within a year or two. This made it possible for tens of thousands of people to live a transnational existence, going to the US for a few months during the picking season and then return to northern Mexico. As this trend increased throughout this period, Tejanos/Mexican-Americans began to migrate north out of South Texas for many of the same reasons, so that by 1930 they made up a significant percentage of the migrants in the Midwest. Although they were still a minority compared to Mexicans, this would change after the start of the Great Depression.[126]

[124] Paul Taylor, Mexican Labor in the United States Migration Statistics III, V 12 (University of California Press, 1928-1932): 39

[125] Ibid

[126] Dennis Nodin Valdes, *Al Notre: Agricultural Workers in the Great Lakes Region, 1917-1970* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1991)

In Chapter 2 I calculated that more than 50% of migrants returned within ten years, a figure consistent with reports on the ground. Migration back and forth between northern Mexico and Texas was mostly driven by the seasonal nature of cotton growing and the fact that harvests in the south reached maturity faster than those planted further north. Catarino Lermo, who had been in the US since the 1890's noted to Taylor that, "the Mexicans used to walk to cotton picking or ride the burros. Many of them stayed and grubbed land. Some returned to Mexico every year. They went as far as Guadalupe and Austin and the Sabine River and returned."[127] The family of Manuel Martinez Castillo did the same, they would travel up south Texas to Corpus Cristi and then into west Texas every year with the cotton crops before they decided to permanently settle in the Austin area.[128]

Likewise, the family of Reynaldo Rendon exemplified this sort of back and forth movement, they were originally from a small town in Nuevo León and throughout the 1920s the parents moved back and forth between the two countries while the children stayed in Mexico. In the late 1920s, when he was nine years old Reynaldo was sent to live with his grandmother in Texas only to return to Mexico when the Depression started and then returned to Texas in the early 1930s. The family then began a life of cotton picking across the entire region, going as far as Mississippi and Michigan, depending on the year. His father eventually came to lead an independent gang of Mexican migrant workers who went from place to place getting contracts. Once when he was arrested for illegal entry his father flatly said, "if they throw me to Mexico I will come back one way or another." "We lived the life of migrants," Reynaldo said. "It's a

[127] Catarino Lermo, September 21, 1929, in Folder 10.7, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[128] Manuel Martinez Castillo, 19, VOCES Oral History Project, Benson Latin American Library, University of Texas, Austin Texas

back-breaking job. If you don't believe me, you should try it." And yet, they managed to return to Nuevo León almost every year so that his siblings were all born in Mexico.[129]

Ward found that migrants from the Bajío states were significantly more likely to return to Mexico than those from the north.[130] For many Mexican from the Bajío, networks made it possible to travel beyond the borderlands. In order to travel hundreds of miles just to reach the border, migrants from central Mexico were more likely to rely on labor agents or family networks. This also meant that they were less tied to a certain location in the US and more willing to listen to those who suggested they keep going north. Given that for the most part they were primarily young men (though not necessarily single) in contrast to migrants from northern Mexico, they were more willing to take risks. This lead to the rise of a somewhat different model of migration, where money sent home was the primary form of male participation in family life. On average their stays in the US were longer than those from northern Mexico; they also sent both a higher percentage of their income to Mexico and a higher number of remittances overall.[131] Earning higher wages in the Midwest and west made adverse conditions and risks worth it for many young men, and made the conditions in Texas less appealing.

[129] Reynaldo Benavidez Rendon, 436, VOCES Oral History Project, Benson Latin American Library, University of Texas, Austin Texas

[130] Ward discounts the role of migrant networks as he looks only at whether relatives were meeting migrants at the border, using border crossing cards. Zachary A. Ward, "The Circular Flow: Return Migration from the United States in the Early 1900s" (Ph.D., University of Colorado at Boulder, 2014).

[131] Paul Taylor, Mexican Labor in the United States Migration Statistics III, V 12 (University of California Press, 1928-1932)

Conclusion

In writing a history of how Mexicans spread across the US it is not my intention to argue that they were not the lowest paid and most exploited of industrial workers in the American West. They certainly were. It is also not my intention to suggest a migratory lifestyle provided a good substitute for the political and social organizing that would have allowed Mexicans to have more power within American society. Among the Mexican and Tejano population of Texas, this period between 1910 and 1930 saw very real resistance to exploitative conditions, through traditional political and labor organizing. The organizations that emerged in this era in Texas, from unions, radical and revolutionary groups, mutualists, Immigrant Protective Leagues, to the LULAC played important roles in improving life in Mexican communities. However, in the 1910s and 1920s Mexican migrants, and Mexican-Americans ran into the very real limits of organizing along American lines and violence undergirded much of the social structure of the West, especially in Texas. Most ethnically Mexican people in Texas were now migrants, not Tejanos, and most of them were left outside of the traditional power structures of the state. Likewise, for workers in the field the results of organizing were mostly the same as the other labor and radical movements in the early twentieth century United States. [132]

As Mexicans became more adept at navigating the borderlands, their actions forced agribusiness and state authorizes to negotiate and renegotiate the laws that governed migration on the local and federal level. However, the crushing of political and labor movements in Texas did not end political opposition and certainly did not render Mexican migrants defenseless. Instead it took on new forms as hundreds of new civic organizations sprang to life and mostly

[132] Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (Texas A&M University Press, 1993)

worked outside of the official U.S. political arena to improve the lives of workers on the ground. Centered around *mutualistas*, the Mexican Consulate, and Spanish language newspapers that made use of Mexican citizenship to appeal to the American state and redress wrongs, a distant public sphere emerged in San Antonio and other Mexican/Tejano communities, creating a localized form of resistance politics.

For Mexicans from northern and central Mexico, picking up and going north was one of the primary outcomes of the Mexican Revolution. One in ten men in Mexico's labor force left the country in this period. Migrating did in fact offer a path out of poverty for many migrants and their families and in the US the search for better wages and conditions led Mexicans to places as diverse as Yakima, Washington and Gary, Indiana in the 1920s. For many, especially those in agriculture such as cotton and beets who found that they could not make enough money to stay in Mexico and had to go back to the fields again and again, it was better than the alternative. While conditions were exploitative at certain firms and industries, the result in most cases was a massive turnover rate as Mexicans, men and women, protested with their feet and left. Few were willing to stay trapped year after year, and in cotton they reacted to the availability of railroad transportation much like their African-American counterparts, by migrating north.[133]

By 1930, Mexican migration had spread well past the borderlands, especially Texas, where it had largely been confined before the Mexican Revolution. The 1930 Census counted about a million Mexicans inside the United States, though the bureau's own estimates put the number at one and a half million. And while migration was lower than the peak years between

[133] James Grossman, *Land of Hope Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989)

1918 and 1924, it was still estimated by the bureau to be twice the size of the official number of about 50-60,000 a year with almost the same number returning to Mexico. In other words, the rise in enforcement had the primary effect of pushing migration into the category of undocumented and into marginal status rather than reduce the overall amount, which would remain at about a hundred thousand a year until the Great Depression.

As Mexicans became more adept at navigating the borderlands, their actions forced agribusiness and state authorizes to negotiate and renegotiate the laws that governed migration on the local and federal level. This effort continued into the late 1920s with the campaign against Mexican mobility in Texas and the creation of the border patrol. It was, however, mostly successful in pushing migration out of Southern Texas. Migration from Mexico into Texas declined in the late 1920s at a greater rate than it did for migration overall. Reports of migrants quitting the fields and going north declined as well. The pushing of Mexican migrants to the margins of political and social space and making them into a docile labor force might seem to have succeeded. However, the crushing of political and labor movements in Texas did not end political opposition and certainly did not render Mexican migrants defenseless. Instead Mexican migrants and Tejanos turned to their own long history and experience with organizing and created new forms of resistance.

By 1930 Mexican migrants were spreading further into new regions of the US. To a significant extent the result of the policies of control pursued in the borderlands. While migration may have decreased to the Lone Star State, a large part of the reason seems to be that by the late 1920s, migration routes had become independent of Texas and were to a large extent skipping it, going *through* Texas to points in California and the Midwest instead. This migration followed the railroads and later trucking routes and resulted in a major shift in the location of Mexicans in

the US and the type of industries they worked in. The Great Depression which began in 1929, ended for the most part the arrival of new migrants until 1940, ending many of these early migration routes. However, the patterns of where Mexicans migrants would live and work for most of the twentieth century were for the most part set by 1930 because in the 1910s patterns of transnational migration spread beyond the borderlands and became national issues for both the United States and Mexico.

CHAPTER 4

The Hoe and the Hammer

Mining, Railroads and Sugar Beets and the Spread of Mexican Migration to the Midwest 1910-1930

By 1930 there were well over a million ethnic-Mexicans in the United States. For ten years prior, the flow of Mexicans back and forth had been around a hundred thousand a year. Far more important for the future of Mexican migration however, was that this flow was no longer contained to the borderlands. Following the course of the railways, Mexicans began to live and work in places that had never had Mexican colonies, communities were created as far as Detroit, Michigan. This chapter looks at the spread of Mexican migration out from the borderlands and into the far west, Colorado and Chicago, in particular. Migrations that began as a response to violence in Mexico, and recruitment in the railroad, sugar beet, and steel industries became self-perpetuating as Mexicans established new *colonias*, and organizations that went beyond just serving the needs of the economy of migrant labor, but added up to a series of interconnected regional circuits that operated by their own economic logics.

Early twentieth century industrialization and migration across the western United States were decades long processes that transformed the borderlands. However, between 1910 and 1930 this process became decidedly tied to Mexico, as migration to and from Mexico skyrocketed that from Asia and Europe mostly came to an end. While most of the academic attention to Mexican migration during this period has focused on Texas and California, cotton and fruit industries respectively, much of the growth in this era occurred in the West and Midwest, where Mexicans

flowed into the mining, railroad, sugar beet, and steel industries. For the most part, Mexicans in these areas went to cities and places of work that had previously not had any significant Mexican populations and where there was little of the legacy of conquest that existed in the southwest.[1] While racism and exploitation were common, they were less structural forces than in California or Texas. These areas for the most part did not build large settled communities, instead, most Mexican migrants came and went, going back and forth between the US and Mexico and moving inside the US at a much larger rate than in the borderlands. Continuing circular migration meant that only small amounts of people settled permanently in Midwest towns. The census study in chapter 2 showed that less than seven percent of Mexicans who migrated to Chicago and the Midwest by 1920 settled there. Those that did settle were disproportionately middle class such as boarding house, pool hall, grocery store, barbershop owners or teachers and clerks whose place in the economy of migrant communities meant that they didn't have to depend on migratory or temporary work that the bulk of the migrant workers did. As a result, the communities proved lasting, even if most of the people did not, the industries that came to depend on Mexican labor kept using them into the Great Depression and later during the Bracero Program.

This chapter examines how the early labor migrations into railroads and mining sectors followed by the large waves of refugees during the Mexican revolution transformed into a more lasting circular migration that tied communities across vast spaces accompanied by the world of organizations that Mexicans built in these various locales. In order to understand how Mexicans moved and spread migratory circuits, it is important to understand the larger economy of migrant

[1] Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: Unbroken Past of the American West*, 1st edition (New York: WW Norton & Co, 1987).

labor, in which certain industries became intimately tied to Mexican migration and in turn drove economic logics that became self-perpetuating. In order to look at these migration circuits in action yet maintain the sense of space and scale that this movement took, this chapter moves between macro and micro scale, looking at both the overall movement and the ways it developed in a few select locations. For example, the Mexican migrants in the industrial west were the most mobile, and they used a common infrastructure to move back and forth. In this case, focus starts with the Cananea Sonora/Chihuahua/Bisbee Arizona mining region and moves northward along the railroads, notably the Santa Fe Railroad into Colorado mining and sugar beet towns towards the industrial center of Chicago.

While the mining, railroad, and sugar beet industries have never received much attention from Chicano scholars, they were critical to Mexican migration in the first half of the twentieth century. Migration to these industries in large part did not lead to lasting large communities the way migration to the Texas- California area did. This was mostly because migrants in these industries tended to primarily move north and then circulate back into Mexico. Consequently, there was only a small second generation in places where these industries were predominant. As hundreds of thousands of Mexicans worked in these three industries in the 1910s and 1920s, these industries were transformed by migrant labor as they expanded in the industrial west almost to the same extent that these industries transformed migrant patterns, spreading Mexican migration networks beyond the borderlands and into Chicago, and Detroit, where large communities did form.

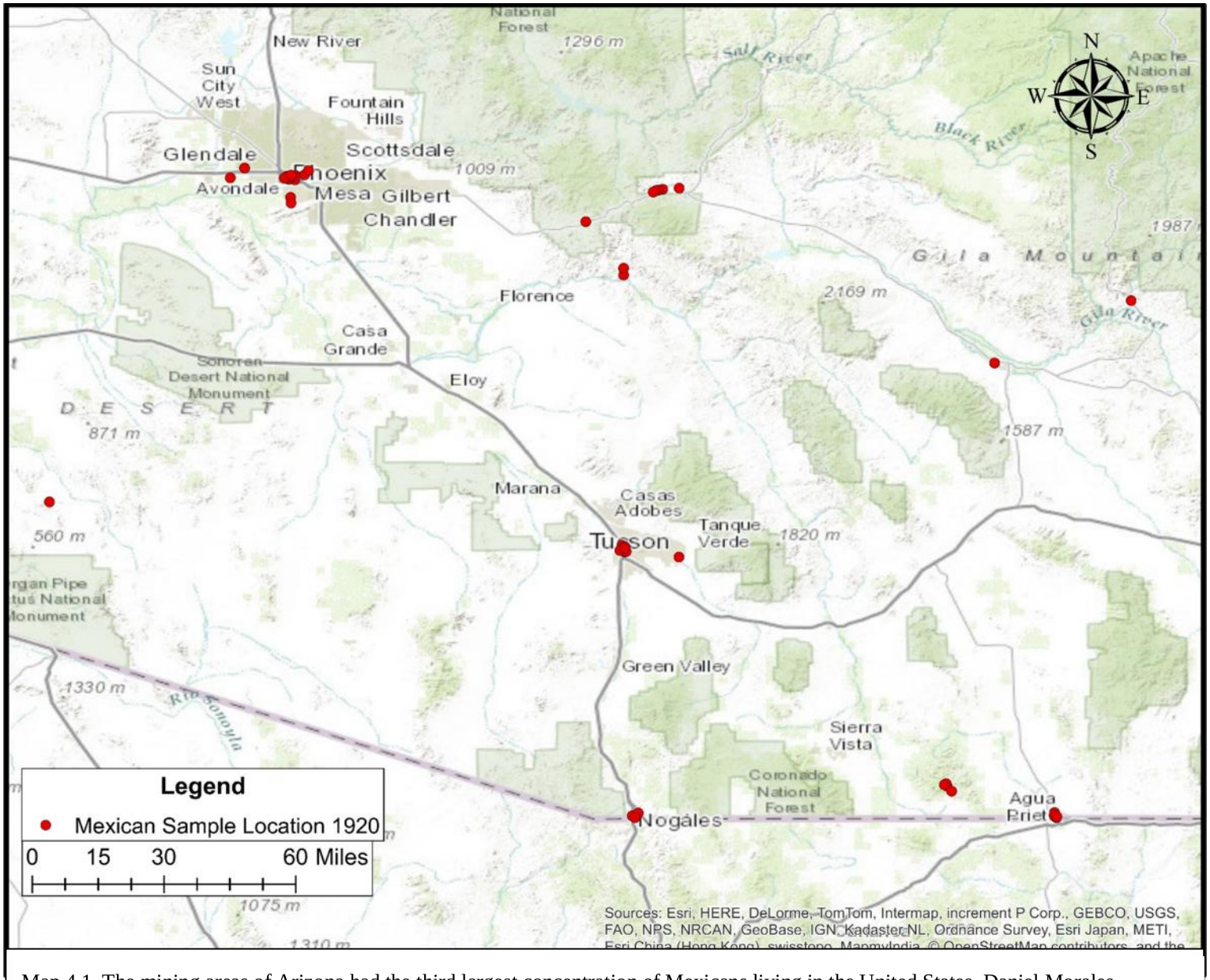
In the United States the industrialization of the West was an international affair that radically altered the social and natural landscape. Despite the myth of the West as an open

society that could fulfill democratic dreams of small farmers, it was in the West that large scale industrial capitalism most heavily shaped society.[2] As land passed from the local native and Spanish-speaking populations to white Americans, corporations acquired the largest and most profitable holdings, displacing many local people.[3] Large scale agribusiness came to rely on a combination of European immigrant and Mexican migrant labor. Meanwhile, railroad and mining industries were built on an unprecedented scale using foreign labor. Using a combination of Chinese, Japanese and European labor first, and later adding Mexican labor, railroad and mining companies dominated local economies and state legislatures.[4] Railroad and mining communities were transnational, ethnically diverse places with large families, dense social organization, and many supporting occupations, where information traveled across different migrant networks.

[2] Thomas Andrew, *Killing for Coal: America's: America's Deadliest Labor War* (Harvard University Press, 2008)

[3] Maria Montoya, *Translating Property: The Maxwell Land Grant and the Conflict over Land in the American West* (University of Kansas Press, 2002); David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (University of Texas Press, 1987)

[4] Katherine Benton-Cohen, Borderline *Americans: Racial Divisions and Labor War in the Arizona Borderlands* (Harvard University Press, 2011); Thomas Andrew, *Killing for Coal: America's: America's Deadliest Labor War* (Harvard University Press, 2008); Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2011)



Map 4.1. The mining areas of Arizona had the third largest concentration of Mexicans living in the United States. Daniel Morales. *Location of Mexican Sample in Arizona 1920* [map]. April 29 2015. Self. Using ArcMap GIS, Columbia University.

Mining the Borderlands

The disparity of the natural wealth of the land compared to the poverty of those that mined that wealth has always existed in northern Mexico. Mined by natives in the *encomendado* system and slaves in the colonial era, northern Mexico was the source of much of the world's silver and gold from the 16th to the 18th centuries. In the nineteenth century sulfur, iron, and, most importantly, copper, replaced silver and gold as the main mining metals. The border mining region, encompassing much of Sonora, Chihuahua, New Mexico, Arizona, and southern Colorado, became an important destination for Mexican migration in the 1910s and 1920s. The companies that dominated the region had overlapping corporate boards, ownership, alliances and, in many cases, those operating in Mexico were subsidiaries of large corporations in the US, such as the American Smelting and Refining Company (ASARCO). With this much movement of capital, it was only a matter of time before Mexican workers would start to see it as a single labor market as well. By the 1920s, when Manuel Gamio was looking for migrants to interview and when the Bureau of Immigration began to keep reliable records of Mexican border crossers, the patterns were already well established. Even after the Bisbee deportations of 1914, when hundreds of striking Mexicans were forcibly deported, the city remained a major destination for Mexican miners along with the towns of Jerome, Moroeci, Globe, and Miami, and the larger cities of Tucson and Phoenix in the Arizona mining region.[5]

[5] Rodolfo F. Acuña, *Corridors of Migration: The Odyssey of Mexican Laborers, 1600-1933* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007).

Much like the sulfur mines of Guxcama described in the first chapter, copper was dominated by foreign investors, and in this case none was more important than the Guggenheim family. Their main holding in Mexico, ASARCO was one of the largest industrial employers in the country before the Revolution, with mining interests across northern Mexico and large smelters in major cities like Monterrey and San Luis Potosí, not to mention their smelter at the border outside of El Paso. The company was in many ways a perfect illustration of the type of international capitalism that drove migration in Mexico; operating on both sides of the border, its mines, foundries and factories were linked to each other and to distant markets by rail. Its vast international workforce was tied to migratory circuits from China to Eastern Europe. The family also controlled many smaller companies that owned mines and smelters throughout Mexico. The Guggenheims' practice of creating American colonies and hiring Chinese immigrants was replicated in many other companies and provoked tensions with Mexican workers. Across the border in El Paso Texas, the availability of raw copper from Mexico made it advantageous for ARSCO to build a smelter at the border, just outside El Paso. The mostly Mexican workforce in the company town, Smeltertown, drew from both sides of the border which meant that they drew radical influences from both sides of the border as well. In 1913 and in 1915 workers at the smelter went on strike under the banner of the International Workers of the World (IWW). The strikes were not successful but they illustrated the tensions among Mexican workers and American employers in this era.[6]

[6] Monica Perales, *Smeltertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2010)

In Sonora, William Greene controlled several logging, railroad and copper companies, in particular the Cananera Consolidated Copper Company (CCCC). Cananea Sonora was a typical boom town in the late nineteenth century, drawing thousands of Mexicans from across the country. Fed by railroads that sent the copper north to Arizona, tens of thousands of tons of copper was shipped from the smelter at Cananea. Around the turn of the century tensions rose between the 5,300 Mexican workforce and the managers especially over the higher pay and better conditions that the 2,200 American workers enjoyed at the company. Supported by the Liberal Party (PLM) from the United States through the newspaper, *Regeneración*, most of the Mexican workers went on strike in 1906. On June 1st, several Americans who worked for the company fired shots into a crowd of 3,000, killing several people. The strikers responded by lynching those who had fired the shots. As CCCC control of Cananea became more tenuous, Greene asked reinforcements from the American government in Arizona. Aided by the Governor of Sonora, a posse of 275 men from Arizona, mostly Arizona Rangers, along with a contingent of *rurales* crossed the border and forcibly ended the strike. To many Mexicans the incident illustrated the Porfirian government's prioritizing American interests over the interests of the Mexican workers. Protests erupted in some parts the country and the slogan "Mexico for the Mexicans" first became popular.[7] In Cananea, many who had fought on the picket lines eventually joined revolutionary forces after 1910, while many more left CCCC and began to migrate north into mines in Arizona.

[7] 1. Claudio Lomnitz, "Chronotopes of a Dystopic Nation: The Birth of 'Dependency' in Late Porfirian Mexico," in Clio/Anthropos, ed. Eric Tagliacozzo and Andrew Willford (Stanford University Press, 2009), 102–38

Arizona in the early nineteenth century was dominated by several large copper companies. Phillips Dodge, Copper Queen and others used their capture of the Arizona state government to carve out fiefdoms where they could exercise political control over their company towns.[8] In the early twentieth century these towns featured international populations drawn from as far away as China and Russia, not to mention many thousands of Mexican miners drawn to the higher pay north of the border. Even though Mexicans were paid less than white "American" workers and were kept out of the most prestigious and highest paying jobs, Mexican families continued to send men to earn wages in the United States, who would then return during holidays and harvest times. Cochise County's Mexican population increased to six thousand by 1910 and continued to grow once the Mexican Revolution shut down many of the mines in Sonora. Despite attempts to disenfranchise the Mexican and Mexican-American population of Arizona, Mexican miners joined their European counterparts in seeking to organize in radical unions. At Bisbee, Arizona, where Mexicans made up a majority in the mines owned by Phelps Dodge, Mexicans stuck under the banner of the IWW, they along with many white European workers struck for better pay and the end of discrimination that kept Mexicans out of the best jobs. Company and state officials attacked the strikers as un-American radicals importing foreign anarchist plots. In Bisbee, the Sheriff and many white townspeople came to believe that the strike was connected to other Mexican revolutionary activity along the border at the time.

[8] Katherine Benton-Cohen, Borderline Americans: Racial Division and Labor War in the Arizona Borderlands (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011)

Company and town officials formed a massive 2,200-man posse and illegally rounded up and "deported" 1,300 strikers to New Mexico, the majority of whom were Mexican. [9]

The break out of the Mexican revolution caused much of the Mexican mining and railroad economy to grind to a halt, especially among foreign owned operations. As mines and railroads shut down across the country entire towns disappeared, the population of Cananea declined drastically as miners sought work elsewhere and anti-Asian immigrant violence increased in Sonora. The Supervising Inspector of the Bureau of Immigration estimated that many of the refugees that came to the United States in this period eventually stayed in the US in towns along border.[10]

The Aguilar family fit this pattern. Daniel Aguilar grew up in Chihuahua as a miner before becoming a store owner in the city of Chihuahua. His wife, Maria, from Durango, was well educated and became a teacher in the city. When the Revolution broke out, Daniel joined the Villista army and when his side lost fled to Miami, Arizona. There, he continued as a miner while Maria became involved in the Cruz Az. Both actively read the Spanish language newspapers *La Prensa* and *El Heraldo de Mexico*.[11] This pattern was also followed by David Villasenor, from Guadalajara was a shoemaker before the revolution in Guaymas, when violence broke out his brother went to the United States and told him that there were jobs there, so he

[9] Katherine Benton-Cohen, *Borderline Americans: Racial Division and Labor War in the Arizona Borderlands* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011)

[10] Letters by Supervising Inspector F.W. Berkshire, Bureau of Immigration, 53108/71 A-Q, INS Records 85, NARA, Washington D.C; Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (Texas A&M University Press, 1993): 70-72

[11] VIDAS, La de Daniel Aguilar y Maria Dolores de Aguilar, May 23 1927, Folder 2, BANC FILM 2322 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

joined him in Tuscon, Arizona where he became a miner. Like many who came during a revolution, he too was a reader of *La Prensa*.[12] Felix and María de la Cruz Gonzalez fled Jalisco during the revolution. They passed at El Paso, and came to the Arizona mining fields. There Felix became a miner in Miami Arizona, and María gave birth to two daughters, Lupe and Mariana, while living there. After several years, possibly after a strike at the mines, Felix left to become a railroad worker on the Santa Fe Railroad in the mid-1920's. During this time the family relocated to California. [13] Like many families in this era, moving within the economy of migrant labor, families migrated seeking refuge from violence and economic chaos and came into the borderlands world of mining and railroad industries.

Across the borderlands, the lure of higher wages and the Revolution drove tens of thousands of Mexican miners from the northern Mexican states into the United States. The result was the creation of hundreds of new Mexican communities, sometimes little more than labor camps, across the mining region, and the spectacular growth of already established communities. Within the region circular migration between the mining areas grew, combining with migration to railroads, the cotton districts, and other areas. Jesus Luis Acuña, an indigenous Sonoran left the seminary and became a mason in Cananea. In 1923 he left Cananea and settled in Tucson where he started his own construction business.[14] As migrants began to move from mining into railroad and other work they eventually spread to other parts of the country. Conrado Martinez,

[12] VIDAS, la Vida de David Villasenor, No 33, May 4 1927, BANC FILM 2322 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[13] Interview with Felipe Morales, December 2013

[14] VIDAS, la de Jesus Luis Acuna, No 12, April 28 1927, BANC FILM 2322 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

from Parral, Chihuahua came with his father to work in the cotton fields and then rail work in New Mexico. When he became older he went to Arizona and became a miner.[15] In the mining town of Jerome, Arizona, the Mexican population grew by several thousand and smaller Mexican camps popped up across Yavapi County. Most of these worked for the United Verde Mining Company, which owned several copper mines and a smelter in Jerome. Mexicans supported a IWW strike during World War I, which provoked a deportation similar to that at Bisbee.[16] Despite this, United Verde openly recruited Mexican miners and eventually earned a reputation as a good place to work, drawing workers from as far away as Aguascalientes.[17] By the mid-1920s, the town featured dozens of Mexican associations, stores, and boarding houses. This is not to say racial tensions did not exist. Mexicans lived separately from whites and were not eligible for some jobs. In 1929 the Mexicans of the city appealed to the Mexican consul in Phoenix, who conducted an investigation, but this investigation did not lead to any action.[18]

The Board of Special Inquiry

While many young male Mexican workers tended to come without thinking much about acquiring the documents and paying all the fees necessary to legally migrate to the United States,

[15] VIDAS, la de Conrado Martinez, No 39 BANC FILM 2322 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[16] John H Lindquist, "The Jerome Deportation of 1917," Arizona and the West (Journal of the Southwest) 11 (3): 233–46

[17] 4-532-1930-615 GOBERNADO DE AGUASCALIENTES- INFORMA SOBRE EMIGRACION, Archivo Histórico del Instituto Nacional de Migración, México D.F.

[18] Mexican Consul, Phoenix Arizona, Janurary 10 1929, El Acervo Histórico Diplomático de Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F.

the same was not the case with families. When men brought their families, both nuclear and extended families, they tended to do so legally, paying the $18 head tax and entering through an official port of entry. However, when appearing before the board, migrant families had to walk a narrow line, assuring the inspectors they could find work and not become Liable to be a Public Charge, while also making sure not to say they already had a job lined up, which was a violation of the Alien Contract Labor Law. A. J. Milliken, Inspector in Charge at the Santa Fe Bridge in El Paso, complained about the difficulty of proving such cases; "Most of the Mexicans will tell of work they're going to and show the letter of a friend or relative. They will say they have work, not realizing they are giving testimony of contract labor, but their letters don't show it… The railroads knowingly lose Mexicans to the Arizona cotton growers, beet growers, etc."[19] Appearing before the Board of Special Inquiry, migrants and their families learned to shape their answers and anticipate agent's questions in order to get across the border.

When Mexican children came to the United States with adults who were not their parents, usually a sibling or uncle or grandparent, they had to appear before the Board of Special Inquiry at a border station of the Bureau of Immigration. At the Arizona and New Mexico stations, the vast majority of children were going to a mining towns to join relatives. While there are thousands of these files, a few examples show the inter-familiar ties that framed the experience of children migrants across the borderlands. These files also show the ways inspectors reinforced gender norms for people seeking to cross. A disproportionate amount of the people who appeared before the board where females, often daughters and sisters who came to join family

[19] A. J. Milliken, Folder 10.4, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

already in the US. They had to perform certain gender roles in their testimony. Micaela Quintero appeared before the board while moving from Cananea to Douglas Arizona. She had worked for CCCC in Cananea and was going to join her aunt.[20] Trinidad Orrellana found herself before the board when she brought her young sisters with her to join her brother. Her family had been migrating from Mexico City to places north until her brother went to work for railroads and then mines in Cananea and Arizona. He sent for her and she came with the rest of the siblings.[21] When Juana Mendoza appeared before the board she had been living with her grandparents in Cananea for several years. Her parents supported her from Bisbee, where her father made $3.40 a day at Copper Queen. Now she and her little brother were going to join them in Arizona.[22] Many children went north to join relatives after the death of those who were taking care of them in Mexico. This was the case of the sisters Catalina and Guadalupe Lopez who were also going from Cananea to the mining camp where their brother lived, Tintown Arizona; and the case for Dolores Morales who was coming after the death of her parents to reunite with her two brothers, who were miners in Tucson; and the case of Rosas Quijada who lost her father, a miner in Cananea, was coming to live with family friends and work as a domestic servant.[23] This traffic of children crossing the border is often overlooked in the study of migration, yet the amounts of

[20] July 24, 1917, BSI 996, Manifest 147, Micaela Quintero, Board of Special Inquiry Cases, 54281/36 A-Q, INS Records 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

[21] July 3, 1917, BSI 1439, Manifest 19-20, Trinidad and Beatriz Orrellana, Board of Special Inquiry Cases, 54281/36 A-Q, INS Records 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

[22] December 19, 1928, BSI 1152, Manifest 403-304, Juana and Jesus Mendoza, Board of Special Inquiry Cases, 54281/36 A-Q, INS Records 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

[23] February 3 1918, BSI 1038, Rosas Quijada; July 22 1919, BSI 1213 Manifest 55-56 Catalina and Guadalupe Lopez; BSI 1901, Manifest 2704, Dolores Morales, Board of Special Inquiry Cases, 54281/36 A-Q, INS Records 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

types of the traffic suggests that children often joined relatives in the US, even distant family members, and that families saw this practice as normal.

As information about border inspection spread, migrants became adapt at answering questions, making sure to say the right things about jobs, money, children, and other issues. In one very common example, in 1917, when Victor Zamorano came with seven distant relatives, mostly women and children, he already knew what he had to do. He explained that he was a miner and lived with his brothers and sisters in Arizona. He had gone down to Mexico to get cousins and other relatives who wanted to come north to work. They gave testimony that there was no work for their respective professions in Sonora. When they were asked why they did not stay and work in Mexico, he answered "because they wanted to come up with us to Winkleman, because all the rest of the family are up there." When asked what they would do he answered, "Fidel is going to work up there." The Inspector asked if there was a lot of work, he answered yes; the inspector then asked him if there was specific place he was going to work, fishing for violation. Without hesitating Victor said, "Everywhere. There is lots of work all over, in the concentrator, in the mines, and everywhere." He also said the women, Josefa and Adela, were "willing to get out and work, to do housework or anything they can get to do." He said they were seamstresses and that there was plenty of work for that in Arizona. When the inspector asked his cousin Fidel about work in Mexico, he answered that, "there has been no work over there. You can't earn wages down there now," but that there was plenty of work in the US. They both insisted that the nephew, Miguel who was 12 would do no work and go to school only. And so,

with all the questioned answered and no violations, they were legally admitted to the United States.[24]

The preciseness of these responses is not to say that what migrants were telling authorities was untrue. Migration was in fact primarily a family affair, with relatives helping other relatives and acquaintances to cross and get started. Feliciano Mendoza and his wife went to Arizona in their twenties, and he became a relatively successful skilled miner, earning $5 a day. When he purchased a small piece of land and built some houses, he decided to settle the rest of his relatives with him there. And so a large group of cousins and Feliciano's mother, Felicita, appeared before the board in February of 1919. Like Zamorano and many others, he assured the board that he had enough money to take care of them and that the older ones would work, that there were few jobs available in Mexico for their skills, and that they could easily find work in Arizona, but not in any specific place. They also assured the board that the younger ones would go to school rather than work in the fields or in any occupation.[25] Francisco Lastra, his wife, mother, cousins and a nephew were all coming from Cananea, to join other relatives in Bisbee for "less than six months". He was a miner for CCCC and described how an American had offered him work in a Bisbee mine. He carefully worded his statements to say he was not promised work and when asked the name of the company, he said, "I don't know, he told me he was going to work at a new concentrator mill up here." Asked how he could find the man, he said, "Some acquaintances of mine have told me he is here in Bisbee in that work". Despite

[24] October 29, 1917, BSI 1602, Manifest 1600-1, Zamorano Family, Board of Special Inquiry Cases, 54281/36 A-Q, INS Records 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

[25] February 21, 1919, BSI 1176, Manifest 565-570, Feliciano Mendoza and Family, Board of Special Inquiry Cases, 54281/36 A-Q, INS Records 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

saying he did not have a direct job offer, he also said he already knew he was going to earn $4 a day. He and his family were approved.[26] In most board of inquiry cases, migrants already had a destination and job in mind when they were migrating, relying on previous visits, family, and friends for help and information, yet they had to fit into a certain pattern of responses in order to pass inspection. Many certainly did have specific job offers. The school attendance data compiled by Paul Taylor shows that most of these school aged migrants probably ended up working for wages.[27]

While mining provided relatively high wages, there were often significant costs. Mexican miners in the United States were usually given the lowest paid jobs, often above ground with little opportunities for advancement. Even when they did work underground, which paid more, they could be given very dangerous jobs with high risks. Employers had a number of justifications for segregation at the mines, among them the assumption that Mexicans worked less than Americans. As Mr Owen, a mine owner, put it "the whites want to boss the Mexicans and he won't stand for it. And the American don't want to work any harder than the Mexican does. So there is a line. Certain jobs belong to the Mexicans, common labor … and machine operating."[28]

[26] October 22, 1919, BSI 1271, Manifest 437-441, Lastra Family, Board of Special Inquiry Cases, 54281/36 A-Q, INS Records 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

[27] Folder 11.8 to 11.25, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

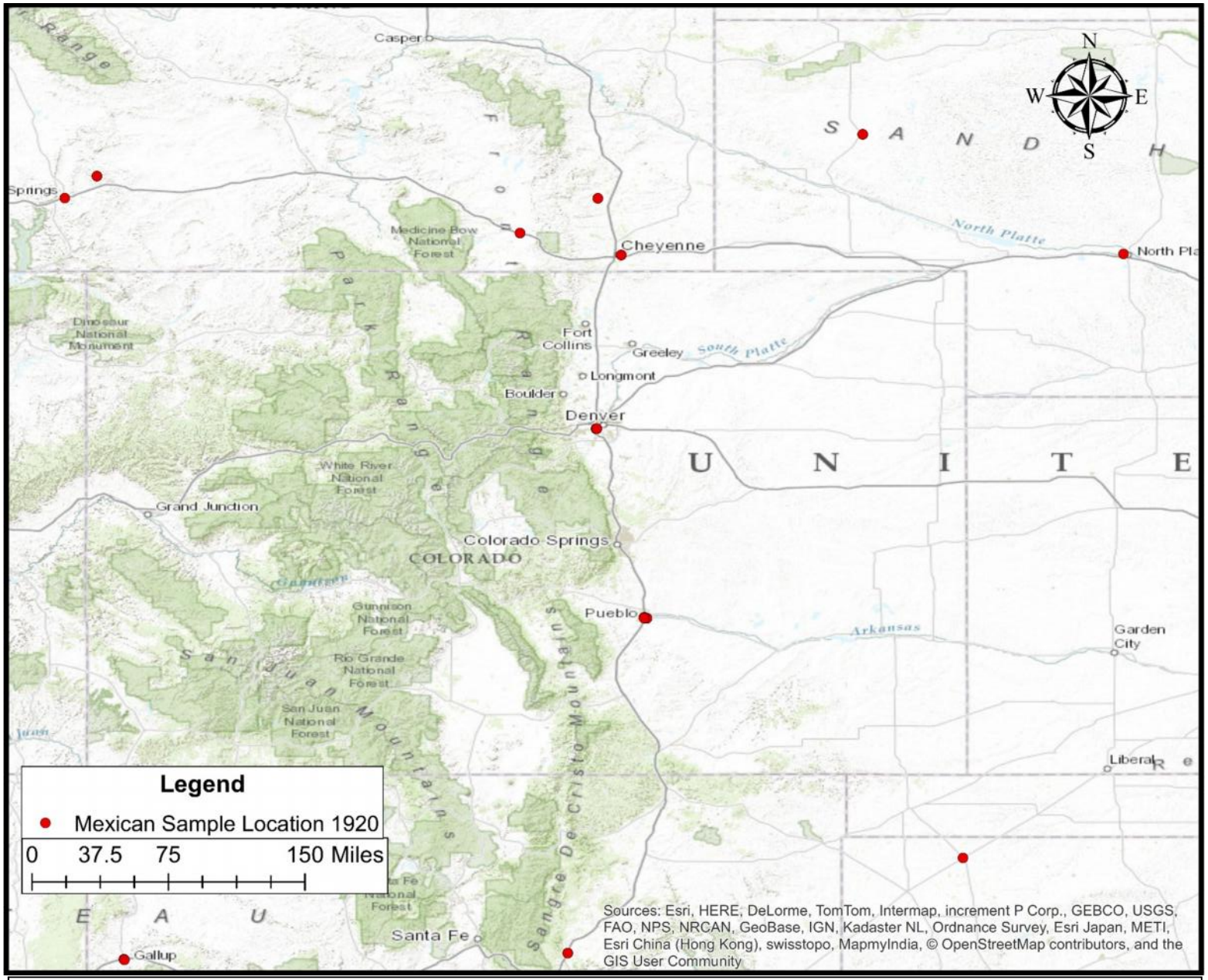
[28] Mr Owens, Deming New Mexico, Folder 10.4, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

Most of the Mexican miners in the borderlands spent several years in the US before returning to Mexico. Pedro Silva grew up along the border, mined coal in Arizona and Texas for many years, and also worked in cotton and going up to Kansas City. He became an alcohol smuggler during prohibition before returning home to Chihuahua and retiring to a ranch he built in Zaragoza.[29] Teresa de Guerrero, from Hermosillo Sonora, came to the US with her husband and lived in Bisbee during the strike, and then moved to Tucson where she ran the local *Cruz Azul* medical association for the Mexican community. After several years she and her husband moved back to Sonora.[30] As more and more miners came up to New Mexico and Arizona, many started to take the railroads north for even higher paying jobs in the mines of Colorado. In doing so, they joined a large migration northward of other Mexicans coming from cotton fields and railroad camps across the borderlands. These in turn were joined by a large outflow of Mexican-Americans into the Colorado fields from New Mexico, where after seven straight years of drought, many older settled Mexican-Americans could no longer make a living in small scale agriculture.[31]

[29] Pedro Silva, VIDAS, Doc 20, No 101, BANC FILM 2322 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[30] VIDA La de Bra Teresa de Guerrero, No 31, BANC FILM 2322 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[31] Sarah Deutsch, No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940 (Oxford University Press, 1989).



Map 4.2. The mining and sugar beet growing areas of the Midwest drew thousands of Mexican migrants. Daniel Morales. *Location of Mexican Sample in Colorado 1920* [map]. April 29 2015. Self. Using ArcMap GIS, Columbia University.

The Mines of Colorado

In Colorado, Mexican migrants were always a minority to a much larger white, and often European migrant, population. Yet over the course of the 1910s and 1920s Mexicans came to dominate several large industries in the state. In particular railroads and sugar beets. In speaking about Boulder miners with Taylor, Sr. Barron, president of the local *Comisión Honorífica* told him that, "most of the Mexicans here are from central Mexico. Some of them have mined in the metal mines of central Mexican and Chihuahua. Some learned mining in the US. A few go to the beets and to the track when mining is slack. Most of the Mexicans however, stay in the mines even during the summer when the season is slack. Some miners come to the mines by way of beet and track work."[32] Overall mining was more desirable than beet or track work and miners tended to stay in mining, switching the types of mines they worked in more than changing industries. Many of these ended up returning to Arizona over time.

In Boulder, Colorado, at the Rock Mountain Mines, union organizing began in 1910 and persisted through a series of strikes that lasted until 1914 and in 1922 were finally broken by the state militia. Throughout the latter period, Mexican migrants came to work in the mines, increasing their numbers from 1618 workers in 1918 to 3218 in 1922, the year of the strike. At the nearby Fredrick Mine, the number of Mexicans increased to 2891 miners and 380 loaders and cutters. Mexicans enthusiastically supported the union and made up 47% of union members at the start of the strike.[33] Yet, other Mexican miners were used as strike breakers, so that in the

[32] D-18-b Barron, president Honorific Commission, Folder 11.15, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[33] D-16 Labor History in Mines, Folder 11.15, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

view of union organizers in Boulder, Mexican miners were little more than scabs; “In 1902 and 1903 strike they were used as strike breakers in other mines probably in Boulder and Weld counties. In the 1910 to 1914 strike the Rock Mountain Fuel Company used them and again in 1922 and their numbers have never gone down again.” [34]

While union members worried about Mexicans becoming strike breakers despite their strong union participation, owners worried about the opposite. Watson, supervisor of the Ideal Mine, where Mexicans made up more than 80% of the total workforce, believed that, “The Mexican is a natural joiner and this is the source of the hold of the IWW. We had four Mexican lodges here when there were only about 150 Mexican miners. Many of the same Mexicans attended lodge meetings four nights a week. They all wore big badges and some of them merely said "*miembro*"… the IWW say to the Mexicans- ‘this was originally Mexican country. The capitalists came in and enslaves the Mexicans and you are not working for them.’”[35]

John Wilson, Superintendent of Big Four Mine noted the ways migrants worked together, “the Mexicans come out of the mine earlier than the others. They say- we're cleaned up. But I know that the Mexicans arrange their work so that they will get cleaned up early the next day. A good many Mexicans alternate between the mines and the beet fields.”[36] Despite being given the least desirable and lowest paid jobs, mines in Colorado generally paid better than those of Arizona and certainly more than railroad or beet work, though less than steel work available in

[34] Ibid

[35] D-21 Watson, Superintendent Ideal Mine, Folder 11.15, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[36] C-3 John Wilson, Folder 11.12, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

cities. The unreliability of employment however meant that Mexicans turned to these other industries, even as many beet and railroad laborers sought work in mines. Much like the mines of Arizona and New Mexico, mining in Colorado was an international affair, with workers from all over the world. In 1914 Mexican workers joined with many European migrants in the United Mine Workers in a strike against the Rockefeller-controlled mines at Ludlow, Colorado. In the violent confrontation that followed dozens of people lost their lives, mostly when the worker's camp caught fire and many families burned to death. Anti-union propaganda painted the strikers as an un-American foreign element.[37] Still, in the years before and after the massacre, Mexican miners from as far away as Zacatecas continued to make their way up from mines in New Mexico and Arizona.

The Santa Fe and the Railway Industry

As railroads moved away from Chinese labor after the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 they began to hire workers from Mexico and in the last years of the 19th century hired Mexican workers to lay and maintain track, especially in the Southwest and Midwest trunk lines. It is among these workers that a new form of migratory labor took root. Several railroads became both major employers of Mexican laborers and the main conduits through which migrants spread across the United States. The completion of the *Ferrocarril Nacional de México* and the *Ferrocarril Central Mexicana* in 1888 and 1884 respectively, connected Mexico and the United States, creating the connections necessary for goods and people to travel deep into both nations.

[37] Thomas Andrew, Killing for Coal: America's: America's Deadliest Labor War (Harvard University Press, 2008)

The Mexican Central connected to the Southern Pacific Railway and the Topeka and Santa Fe Railway at Cuidad Juarez/El Paso while the Mexican National ended at Laredo, where it connected primarily to the Texas-Mexican, the Rock Island Railroad and the International and Great Northern railways systems. With wages that averaged from $1 to $1.25 a day for unskilled section labor, the pay on the northern side was twice that of the southern side, wages were higher the further north you traveled.[38] The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad in particular played an important part in the spread of Mexican migrants across the United States. Linked with the Mexican Central Railroad at El Paso, its system spread across the southwest from Los Angeles to Chicago. In the early twentieth century it began to heavily recruit Mexican labor at El Paso and possibly across the border to replace its mostly Chinese and European immigrant workforce with Mexicans, a practice that other railroads soon adapted.

Founded in 1859, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad's system was the largest in the American west. Starting in the 1880's it began to use Mexican labor in the New Mexico division, but it was not until 1905 that the company began to use Mexican workers outside the immediate border regions. In that year, the company hired three thousand Mexicans, less than a third of their total labor force for section laborers, but the change was already underway. Ten years later in 1915 it was more than eleven thousand workers, two thirds of their labor force, and in 1927 it was thirteen thousand, almost 90% of their track labor positions. By 1928, their Los Angeles division had no workers other than Mexicans.[39]

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[38] Juan R. García, *Mexicans in the Midwest, 1900-1932*, First Edition(Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004), 6.

[39] General Offices, Topeka Kansas-Los Angeles California, *Mexican Labor in the United States Railroad Studies, Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe*, Folder 12.46, Carton 12, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

As Mexican migrants spread across the railroad industry they encountered several challenges to moving up in the industry. While more stable than beet or cotton work, the hiring of section labor was seasonal in nature with large drops in employment in winter from October to February. More importantly, they were kept out of the most desirable jobs. The industry was divided between unionized skilled and un-unionized unskilled occupations. AFL affiliated brotherhoods controlled access to jobs as engineers, conductors, firemen, and trainmen. Instead Mexicans worked in track maintenance, track building, and repair shops that were not unionized. This lack of unionization for unskilled laborers hurt organizing efforts during the railroad strikes in the 1920s.

While Mexicans joined mining unions in large numbers, and many agricultural workers joined short lived transnational unions discussed in the last chapter, there were few union options for railroad workers. Clemente Idar and the AFL did not make any major attempt to unionize the Mexican section hands as they did agricultural and skilled workers. Many railroad unions had clauses that excluded non-citizens out, and few Mexican migrants were willing to naturalize. This along with a general hostility towards unskilled workers and non-whites made it so that Mexicans were not part of any major railroad unions before the Great Depression. Instead workers resorted to a much more day-to-day level of asserting themselves, and when that did not work, they did not hesitate to quit. Mexicans on the railroad in general worked in gangs, and they traveled that way as well. A group of friends who may have a leader could travel together, sharing resources and working for different railroads. Paul Taylor ran into a group of Mexicans who had just quit when an American foreman tried to stop them from smoking during their breaks. F. Huerta remembered a time that he and his friends struck to reinstate a foreman they

liked, “A rail on our track was found to be one inch from the end of another by the rail-master, so he fired the American foreman. The Mexicans liked the foreman and struck unless he should be returned. The rail-master tried to get the men out of the cars, but they asked for their checks before they would get out. So he gave us our time.”[40]

In the 1910s the railroads became conduits for other labor markets, as workers began to use the railroads to migrate to other locations and work in other industries, especially agriculture and mining. Correspondence and newspaper articles about railroads show that desertion for other work had already become a problem by 1910. Some railroads were very concerned about the large numbers of Mexicans who left, especially in Arizona and New Mexico, where losses to the mines were particularly high. Benito Rodriguez, a Mexican and a labor agent, remembered that “in New Mexico and Arizona they used to lose many [railroad workers] to the mines which paid from $2 to 3.75 [a day]. We used to lose as high as fifty percent of our shipments. We used to lose especially experienced miners to the Arizona copper mines, and the coal mines around Gallup and in the California mines near Barstow and Mojave. We also lost to the lumber mills at Flagstaff and Williams where the wages were from $1.50 to $2.5. We used to lose nearly half of our shipments to California agriculture.” As a result, the railroad began to take extra precaution: “they used to lock the doors on the trains and have a piece of lumber screwed on the outside of the windows. They used to do this in 1908. Now they lock the doors in the parts of the country where they may jump off. The Mexicans used to ask to buy sandwiches and coffee or cigarettes.

[40] F. Huerta, June 8 1928, Folder 11.32, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

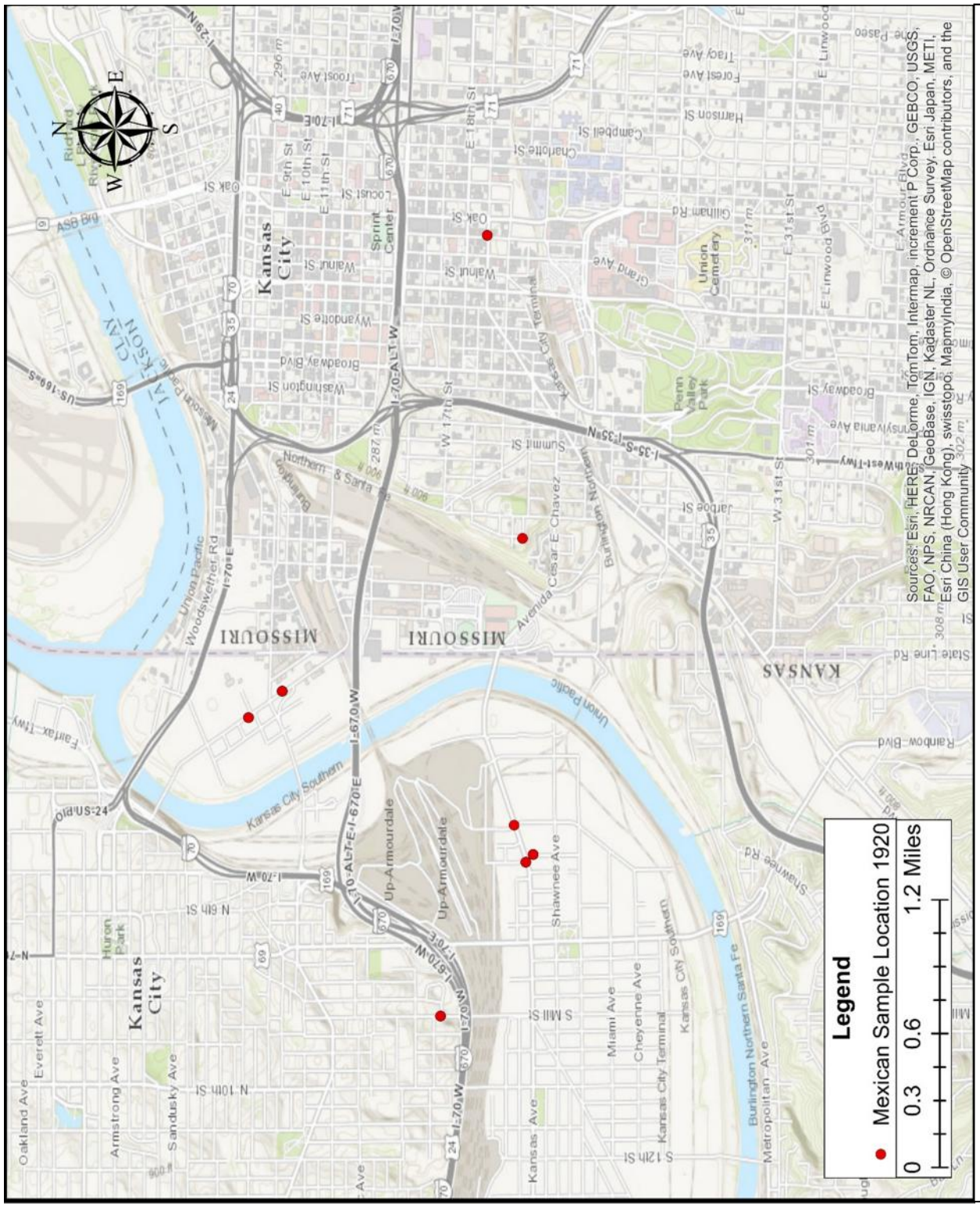
These were pretexts for jumping the train… the illiterates even used to know when to jump from the descriptions that had been given to them."[41]

The Southern Pacific complained to the *Daily Free Lance* of Imperial County, California, that "the 160 Mexican laborers who deserted the service of the Southern Pacific last week after pay day have decided to make it a permanent thing. Hardly any of them came back at all, and the railroad has sent to El Paso an order for 160 more Mexicans to take the places… The Southern Pacific has a permanent order at El Paso for about fifty Mexicans per week, as that is the number which experience has shown to be deserting in that time".[42] This same pattern took hold in other railroads, sometimes actively encouraged by a policy of hiring a lot of labor in one season and then releasing it in another. As Mr. Carr, commissary for the CB&Q Railroad put it, "in 1910 we brought about 4000 Mexicans from the southwest, families and all, and scattered them out over the Rock Island [line]. At the end of June they were let off, due to the financial policy of the company. We were under contract to return them to El Paso. We were about to switch about 200 to 250 of these to the Burlington. These were the first Mexicans the Burlington ever had. In the fall the Burlington passed them back to the Rock Island, and the Rock Island sent them to the border. Some of the Mexicans stayed and did not go back."[43]

[41] Benito Rodriguez, November 22 1928, Folder 10:4, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[42] "Daily Free Lance" of El Centro, Imperial County CA Tue, March 1 1910 in 52546/31 the Immigration and Naturalization Service [INS] 85, National Archives and Records Administration [NARA], Washington D.C.

[43] Mr. Car, June 21, 1928, Folder 11.32, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California



Map 4.3. Note the heavy concentration of Mexican housing near and at railroad yards in Kansas City.

Map by Author, created May 4, 2015. Data from Author's *Location of Mexican Sample in Kansas City 1920*.

In the years after 1910, the practice became a regular part life for both Mexicans working on railroads and those who hired them to such an extent that the railroad came to see turnover as a regular part of their relationship with workers and the other industries on the tracks. This was aided by the spread of information along the lines. As many migrants who came north because of the Mexican Revolution became readers of *La Prensa*, railroad workers and miners helped spread the newspaper from the borderlands as far as Chicago. The normalcy of the large rate of turnover however did not stop railroads from trying to control their labor, or the Mexican workers from resisting them however they could. Throughout the 1910s and 1920s and especially during the WWI bracero program, railroads continued to have the second highest turnover rate of any industry. This was despite pay that was about 30% higher than agriculture and could reach $5 a day in some types of jobs. Part of this was undoubtedly because of the difficulty of the work, where long hours in all weathers was expected, and the high mortality rate that filled too many of the death benefit cases in the Mexican consulates. But another part was that the railroads were particularly suited for migration. Railroad camps, company towns, often made of disused wooden box cars were among the worst housing Mexican migrants could live in, yet they were also hives of movement, people rarely lived in one for more than a year, while the camps served as places where information traveled, where word about jobs or what the latest news from Mexico came via newspapers and word of mouth. Able to travel thousands of miles at low cost (especially when they got a pass), connected to major mining, manufacturing, and beet industries, migrants found railroads an easy path out from the borderlands into other industries.

When World War I began, the availability of labor for railroads drastically decreased and the industry, much like the cotton industry in Texas, appealed to the Federal government for temporary war-time exemptions from the 1917 Immigration Act and the Contract Labor Act for Mexican workers. The program that the Bureau of Immigration created brought in about 72,000 workers over three years to work in agriculture, mining and railroads. As I discussed in the last chapter, the way the program was structured made it easy for workers to skip on contracts and other employers to lure them from the companies participating in the program. This was a particular problem in the railroad industry because of the many different types of employers it came into contact with. Reporting about the program, W. H. Talbot of the L. H. Manning Company, a recruiting agency for railroads noted that, "between 1917 and 1920 under the United States Railroad Administration we handled labor for the Western Pacific Railroad. About 60% of the Mexicans go to work where we can identify them. Of course some others go to work but on different sections and with other names. In some seasons the loss is heavier and in certain seasons the loss is slight."[44]

Throughout this period the primary way of recruiting and contracting Mexicans was through the various labor agencies that were located across the borderlands. Most had offices at the major railroad hubs- El Paso, San Antonio, Laredo, Los Angeles, St. Louis, Chicago, and Kansas City. As mentioned in the last chapter, from their locations on the border labor agents sought to recruit workers while avoiding running afoul with authorities in Mexico and the United States charged with enforcing laws against contract labor and undocumented migration.

[44] Mr. W. H. Talbot, Los Angeles, Dec 20, 1928, Folder 10:4, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

Agencies usually offered to pay for transportation to and from the place of employment, to pay for food and logging on the way to the work site, and a contract with an agreed upon wage. Actual follow through varied greatly. Some agencies, especially the smaller ones, routinely reneged on their promises of pay and transportation, and larger ones often forced workers to buy at stores and live in housing that was overpriced and owned by the company. The agencies ranged from small one-man shops to large operations like the Holmes Supply Company that supplied workers for the Sana Fe and ran dozens of stores, camps, locations and even a clinic in Los Angeles. Labor agencies for railroads played a key role in the spread of Mexican labor across the United States even while they themselves fought an increasingly difficult battle to maintain control of that labor.

Each of the major labor agencies supplied several thousand Mexican workers a year to railroad companies, originally hiring Mexicans from Mexico or at the border but eventually relying on Mexicans already in the country. Like agriculture, there were yearly cycles with the bulk of the hiring occurring in the spring and very little hiring in the winter months of November, December and January. Looking at two agencies, the Holmes Supply Company and the Hanlin Supply Company, which both hired for the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad, a pattern emerges; they begin by hiring at the border, acting as drivers of migration, but with the large turnover and the growth of circular migration they lost control of the migration and came to depend on Mexicans who arrived by themselves in order to fill their labor contracts. The Hamlin Company shipped between four thousand and seven thousand workers a year from 1913 to 1920 from El Paso with almost all of them recruited from Mexico, hitting a peak in 1916. But from

1920 until 1929 the year number falls to less than three thousand, often below two thousand.[45] In 1926 they even began to ship workers from Chicago to the borderland states. The Holmes Company had a similar fate, from about nine thousand workers in 1923 to less than three thousand by the end of the decade.[46] The Zarate-Avina Company also suffered a general decline, while the L. H. Manning Company had no discernible pattern in its yearly fluctuations.[47] This decline is particularly explained by a drop in overall employment in the railroad industry, as railroads struggled and consolidated in the 1920s. However, in most of these railroads, the overall numbers of Mexicans used did not decline as the same rate.

In several letters, various managers of the Santa Fe Railroad offered their opinion of Mexican labor and migration. Mr Hill and Mr Brewer laid out the reasons for railroads preferring Mexican labor over time, showing many of the assumptions employers made about Mexicans. Mr Hill generally showed a nuanced view, explaining that they worked harder and more consistently than Europeans and Asian labor; that they could not be forced to work and would only do what was in their own interests; and that using Mexican foremen was generally better than having white foremen for avoiding problems and improving productivity. His only complaint was their high turnover rate. Brewer on the other hand, shared the stereotyped view of Mexicans as generally docile. He wrote that they were better suited for the heat of the southwest

[45] Mexican Laborers Shipped From El Paso, Texas, to the A.T.&.S.F. RY. Co., Western Lines by the Hanlin Supply Company, Folder 12.46, Carton 12, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[46] Monthly Shipments of Mexican Railroad Laborers from El Paso Texas, by the Holmes Supply Company, Folder 12.46, Carton 12, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[47] Monthly Statements of the Zarate-Avina Company and L. H Manning Company, Folder 12.46, Carton 12, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

than other types of people, and that they had lower turnover than other groups. Mr Fink, Assistant Treasurer of the railroad, talked about recruitment and movement of workers. After explaining how they worked with agencies, he said that they worked with the government to check that workers did not leave the industry, but this was easier said than done. Workers started to leave in September or October, some returning to Mexico, as the company usually encouraged workers to take the railroad pass to El Paso. However, "the beet sugar companies raise hell with our track force in the spring. They send oily tongued fellows down the line who promise our men everything and they pick them off right and left." Mr. Goeldner, an assistant to the General Manager of the railroad agreed. He worked with the government to make sure workers only stayed six months (and thus avoiding more stringent immigration requirements), and tried to keep Mexican nationals west of Kansas, as he has "experience with those that come from Mexico and want to use our road for getting transportation to the beet fields or the steel mills of Illinois or Michigan". He praised the workers who came back to the Santa Fe after going back to Mexico year after year; some of his employees for as much as 12 years had done a yearly migratory circuit. These formed the core of their workforce with many younger man leaving each year. As to beet recruiters, "We get them on trespassing on our property…. We land a few of them every season, throw them off the property or in jail…" [48]

Further north railroad companies found that Mexican workers who came to work for them in Chicago and the upper Midwest had just as high a turnover as those that left them before reaching the city. Employers, like those in other places complained about this tendency to quit,

[48] General Offices, Topeka Kansas-Los Angeles California, Mexican Labor in the United States Railroad Studies, Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe, Folder 12.46, Carton 12, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

often for what the employer saw as little reason. Mr Donahue of the Chicago & Alton complained that, "we have had a dozen Mexican assistant foremen; some of them have been offered foremen's jobs but didn't take them. They didn't seem to want the responsibility," though Taylor suspected that the company discouraged Mexicans from taking better positions.[49] Donahue also commented on what he perceived to be a difference between Europeans and Mexican workers, "The Italians were always wanting something, 10 hours pay for 9 hours' work, or higher wages. The Mexicans find out what's paid, and if they take the job they accept [the wages]. If they are dissatisfied and quit, they ask for their time and leave without bothering the others."[50] Mr Williams of the B&O railroad also expressed his frustration with being unable to control them, at least through force, "The Mexicans are OK or not, depending upon the foreman. If he speaks politely to them and knows how to handle them, he can get a lot of work out of them. If he tried to drive them with a pick-handle he can't get much."[51] While Mr Pratt of the CB&Q agreed, "Mexicans labor is better if it is handled right. You can't cuss the Mexican out or call them down in front of the others or they may quit and take the whole gang with them. It is best to take them aside and tell them their work is not satisfactory. When we began employing Mexicans we sent a man around for the foremen to advise how the Mexicans should be handled."[52] John Generella of the C&NW agreed with this sentiment, "Other nationalities like

[49] Mr Donahue, Roadmastern Chicago & Alton RR, Chicago July 1928, Folder 11:32, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[50] Ibid

[51] Mr Williams, Chief Clerk to Engineer, Baltimore & Ohio, Chicago terminal, Folder 11:32, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[52] Mr. T. E. Pratt, Special Agent. CB&Q Railway- Chicago, Folder 11:32, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

the Greeks and Italians used to quit in groups, if one was fired or quit, he would call Come On Boys, and they would all go. If the Mexicans don't like the food, foreman, wages, or the job, they just walk away."[53]

By the mid-1920s, Mexicans were using rail work as a way to lower the costs of travel to cities further north and better work. In 1928, internal documents from the Santa Fe showed that the Holmes Supply Company estimated yearly turnover at 150% to 200%, "but for publication, it conservatively estimates it at "over 100%". This same report also showed that the vast majority of those who left went to other industries, while a significant minority went back to Mexico.[54] F. Huerta used short term rail work to help his business get off the ground, "A man came out from Kansas City to get subscriptions for *Cosmopolita* the restaurant man told him he had two printers. Only one was needed, so when the order for one printer came, I went with my friend who was more experienced. Two days after he went, I was left off. Then I returned to Melbourne on an extra gang". Later he used rail work to move to Chicago and continued his various printing and boarding house businesses there.[55] Juan Martinez went north working on the railroads; he explained to Manuel Gamio that work was poor in Durango and he had heard it was better north, so he and his brother Guadalupe and went up to Nebraska and then Kansas City. After spending

[53] John Generella, Employment Agent and Commissary for C&NW Ry, Chicago July 11 1928, Folder 11:32, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[54] "Mexican Labor in the United States Railroad Studies, Santa Fe Railroad," August 1928, Folder 12.53, Carton 12, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[55] F. Huerta, June 8 1928, Folder 11.32, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

time on railroads and beet fields, he married and settled in El Paso, where he worked at a steel foundry.[56]

Having become the primary track labor for the southwest in the early 1900s, Mexican workers became more common outside of the borderlands along the railroad lines. Some railroads such as the Santa Fe encouraged this spreading, while others sought to keep their labor force under control. By 1925, Mexican workers were a plurality of employees on some of the largest railroads in Chicago, though their integration into workforce still lagged in many Midwestern cities. This growth did not go unnoticed by the Bureau of Immigration and the railroad companies themselves. By 1924 many within the bureau had all but thrown up their arms in despair of controlling the migrants. In Denver, the district director of the bureau, informed the Commissioner General that he would no longer try to deport those who were in the country illegally, as he was finding that many railroad workers were using it as a way to get a trip home and then were back after a few months. Estimating that there were 6000 undocumented migrants in his district, he changed the policy to only deport those who has violated local laws.[57] He was not alone in this opinion, similar statements were made by inspectors in El Paso in 1920.

Meanwhile as the sugar beet industry grew exponentially in the 1910s and 1920s, its demand for labor did as well. As primarily a northern crop with a single growing season, growers had difficulty finding labor before they turned to Mexicans. Sugar beet companies began to recruit workers, often entire families, straight from the rail lines. After struggling with labor

[56] Juan Martinez, VIDAS, Doc 15 No 73, Appendice III, BANC FILM 2322 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[57] District Director to Commissioner General in DC, August 8 1924, in 55091/6 in INS Records 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

needs for several years, in 1925 the CB&Q Railroad made an arrangement with the Great Western Sugar Company whereby Great Western agreed to provide Mexican families enough money and housing for the winter while the CB&Q provided the men with winter track labor work in Kansas City, and then returned them to the beet fields in the spring. This arrangement proved advantageous to the companies and migrants.[58] J. S. Silva, an employment agent based in El Paso who for years had sent workers to cotton fields and railroad companies, began to get orders from beet fields in the 1910s. In 1908 the American Sugar Beet Company asked him for one hundred workers ten years later he was sending 1,000 families every year to the beet fields of Colorado.[59]

The Sugar Beet Industry

Before the 20th century, the sugar industry in the United States got its sugar primarily from sugar cane plantations in the Carribean or Hawaii. However, following the economic recession of the 1890s and the 1896 election of William McKinley, the US Congress passed the 1897 Dingley Tariff which raised tariffs on manufactured and agricultural goods. For sugar this rate was as high as 57%. One of the results of the rise in prices of imported sugar was the meteoric rise of the sugar beet industry in the continental US. Working with 75,000 farmers, the industry grew to almost one million acres of cultivated land producing about 1,200,000 short

[58] Letters Re Colorado Beet workers, CB&Q and Great Western Sugar Company, Folder 11.32, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[59] J. R. Silva, November 17, 1828, Folder 10.4, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

tons per year.[60] The tariff, along with the irrigation projects paid for by the Reclamation Act ensured that in several years the industry went from a tiny experimental source of sugar to the primary source in the country. Vast fields began to open up from Michigan to Washington State. As more and more farmers switched to growing beets, they began to hire labor outside of their families. Many turned to European migrants in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota and eventually they began to hire Mexicans.

The large sugar beet companies that arose in this period for the most part did not own their own land. Sugar beets grow and collect sugar until they die in winter, thus it is most profitable to harvest them right before winter sets in, usually in just a few weeks in October, which meant a need for a large, temporary and migratory work force. Additionally, large labor forces were needed for thinning, blocking, and hoeing, very difficult stoop tasks. In this era each acre of beets needed about 120 man hours of work per season, a situation companies tried to address by having the migrants themselves take responsibility for the beets by subcontracting land from farmers. Beets could only be grown on a field every few seasons, and so could not be grown by a single corporation. Instead tens of thousands of individual farmers signed contracts with large refining companies every season. The companies owned the factories, storage facilities, seed, equipment, and credit that farmers needed, and most importantly, they controlled the labor. As R. H. Cottrell explained, "It is necessary to bring in transient workers. Usually a substantial part of the cost of recruitment and transportation is borne by the company. Such costs include wages and expenses of labor recruiting agents, fares, freight and drayage on household

[60] R. H. Cottrell, *Sugar Beet Economics* (The Caxton Printers, 1952), pg. 23.

goods of labor, and subsistence for field labor en route or while unemployed… The company's office in this activity is only that of agency to secure farm help for employment by beet-growing farmers. The workers are not employed by the company."[61] Companies worked with grower associations to try to keep workers on the land through various inducements and threats, but ultimately settled on strategically placing labor camps that would provide workers for an entire region and then be disbanded.

Nowhere was the growth of the sugar beet industry more visible than in Colorado, and in that state no company was as influential in making this possible than the Great Western Sugar Company. Founded in 1901, the year it built its first sugar mill in Loveland, Colorado, the company technically did not own any of its fields. Instead like the rest of the beet industry, it bought the beets individual farmers grew and processed them and sold the resulting sugar. Unofficially, with its vast contracts and control of rail transportation, its power over its farmers was absolute. Great Western Sugar did the hiring of Mexican workers for seasonal contracts, not the farmers. The company set the prices of the sugar, and it set the wages paid the workers. Along with the Utah Sugar Company, the American Sugar Refining Company, and the Holly Sugar Company, Great Western dominated sugar beet growing in the west. By 1909 the beet sugar industry was hiring 26,000 Mexican workers a year, a number that rose to 40,000 in the 1910s and 1920s. The sugar beet industry was born as a consequence of protectionist policies, but what really made the industry possible in the first half of the twentieth century was Mexican labor migration. In the far west in particular, Mexican labor did not come to work fields that

[61] R. H. Cottrell, Sugar Beet Economics (The Caxton Printers, 1952), 55.

already existed and needed labor. Rather, the land was transformed into fields *because* of the availability of Mexican labor and railroad transportation. This was true in sugar as much as in the "winter garden" of Texas or the fields of California.

In many ways, the sugar beet industry took advantage of nearby mining and railroad industries to complement its own labor force. The sugar beet fields were the primary destination of Mexican workers who quit the World War I bracero program. Beet growers actively recruited from railroads, mines and the cotton fields. For example, the Michigan beet grower who advertised on radio stations near the border for workers in Texas to come north, provoking an investigation by the INS in the last chapter.[62] Workers in Colorado and other places were encouraged to work for beet companies from spring through fall and then with a mining, railroad or manufacturing employer during the winter months. Many Mexicans found their way to Denver and Chicago because of this. While railroads mostly wanted single men, beets workers were paid per field which encouraged whole families from Mexico to settle in the fields. Mexicans were paid a single price per field, a practice that encouraged the use of all family members, even children, as laborers. In a 1924 census of beet farmers in the Mexican colony of Greeley, only 5 land contracts were for single males, the other 40 were for families that ranged from 2 to 9 field hands (the company only counted people capable to picking beets), with most having between 25 and 45 acres of land and the average about 32 acres. These statistics were

[62] This prompted an inquiry by the Bureau of Immigration, however the paper work has been lost, 56,134-268 in INS, NARA, Washington D.C

similar across all the counties in the region.[63] The industry fought the 1916 Child Labor Act, and later won an exemption against school attendance laws in Colorado. Recruiters fanned all over the borderlands, signing workers for yearly contracts at relatively high wages and in some cases offering housing and land that few others in the southwest were willing to match. However, despite their attempts to build a proletariat in the fields, few Mexicans desired to stay in the north, especially during the winters. Instead, much like the cotton industry in Texas, Mexicans almost never worked at one place very long before moving on. Instead many used each job as a springboard to another type of work, especially in urban areas and the steel industry, before returning to Mexico with what they had earned.

Like the sugar beet industry in the upper Midwest, farms in Colorado tried several short lived labor strategies before turning to Mexican labor. The manager of the First National Bank at Eaton remembered, "We used to have Russians when the factory was put up in 1902. The Russians declined in number and the Japs came in about 1912 to 1915. There are still some Russians, usually leasing land. Then the Japs declines in number and the Mexicans were brought in. The Mexicans earn about $500 in beets on average and $100 in other farm work. An ordinary family will handle about 20 acres of beets at $25 per acre." Once they came, farmers sought to induce them to stay, "some Mexicans stay all winter. A few buy property, but most of them rent at $7 or $8 per month from Americans. A few save and a few have checking accounts."[64]

[63] Statistics: Beet Labor report, December 15, 1926, Beet Labor Living in the Greeley Mexican, Folder 11.19, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[64] E-37 Bank Manager, Folder 11.16, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

By the 1920s, many labor agencies were recruiting workers across the borderlands. The American Beet Sugar Company got about half its Mexican workforce from New Mexico and other parts of Colorado, and about 1,800 families a year from other parts of the country. The Michigan Sugar Company shipped about two thousand workers a year into the state, while the Holly Sugar Company of Colorado recruited about the same numbers as the American Beet Sugar Company.[65] The sugar beet companies and the labor agencies that worked for them generally sought to control their labor force through yearly contracts and the encouragement of permanent migration north. One agent explained to researchers, "We get solos from Fort Worth, Kansas City, Buffalo, and El Paso. Those from Texas are usually cotton pickers. The New Mexico ranchers are all right. We get railroad and cotton workers and pool hall floaters. Many do their buying in sterling [silver from mines] and may winter there. Some work in corn, picking where they're paid by the bushel. A few live on ranches and about 15 per cent stay over the winter."[66] Robert Barr, a farm manager explained why he sought to keep his workers in debt, "the farmers need cheap labor and the Mexicans furnish it. The families are more stable than the solos. The solos drift out in mid-season or else they don't appear for work at all." In answer to the question what effect advances had on the Mexicans he replied "A family in debt and without money can't move."[67]

[65] American Sugar Beet Company, Folder 11.19, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[66] A-19 On Employment, Folder 11.8, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[67] D-11 Robert Barr, Littleton Colorado, Folder 11.14, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

With the most sprawling operations the Great Western Sugar Company had a particularly hard time gathering workers. In letters between the company and Mountain States Beet Growers Marketing Association, there was a lot of disagreement over the wage levels and number of workers to be recruited, with owners wanting more workers. The Association wanted the Great Western Sugar Company to supply 7700 workers, which presented a problem with competition, as the company put it, "the Michigan Sugar Companies are reported to need 6000 from Texas points. Other eastern Sugar companies also recruit labor there as do also other sugar companies operating in the west. Besides in the last year eastern manufacturers, notably steel companies that are going onto the 8-hour shift basis, shipped a large number of Mexican laborers from Texas and are expected to resume shipping by April 1st. Next, they pay 40 to 50 cents per hour, offer steady work for a year, free transportation, if labor works 90 days, opportunity for promotion, etc. This is an especially hard line of competition for agents recruiting field laborers. Labor for industrial work was shipped last year as far east as Maryland. Very large shipments were made of Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. We have definite advice that the US Steel Corporation will be in the field by April 1st." Additionally there were the railroad companies to worry about, "during the whole period of 1923, 9200 agricultural laborers were shipped out of Texas to other states, and 35500 industrial and railway workers, mostly Mexican in both cases."[68]

Much like the railroad industry, recruiting and labor agents were important to introducing Mexicans to the sugar beet industry, but they did not control labor for very long. Very quickly Mexicans began to use each other's networks find jobs and spread information, leaving agents

[68] Letters: Mountain States Beet Growers Marketing Association, FOLDER 11.19, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

with little to do. Taylor encountered two migrants in Eaton Colorado who had come up from Arizona and New Mexico and had teamed up on a contract for fields. They had signed a contract for fields that would normally require a family, but instead they signed them for fifteen days apart so that they would work together on one field and then another and clear $300 in a month. One of them had thought of this after two years of seasonal beet work in the Eaton area.[69]

Employers noticed this change as well. Dr. Draper, superintendent of the Holly Sugar Company saw the change by the late 1920s, "The last four or five years there were mostly Spanish Americans from southern Colorado and New Mexico. In 1920 we shipped in seven hundred from El Paso. We shipped in probably five or six hundred. Some now come to the beet fields by auto and some stay over the winter."[70] Phill Dale noticed, "We used to bring up Mexicans from New Mexico, meeting them at El Paso. Now we don't have to go so far south. There is plenty of labor now. We don't have to pay so much transportation as we used to. More Mexicans come by themselves. There are more Russians in the North Platte Valley than Mexicans, but 90 percent of the labor here now is Mexican."[71]

Despite the fact that Mexicans started to come to the fields by themselves, beet growers never stopped trying to get more to come, as few stayed very long, often using it as a step towards other work. Fed Holmes, superintendent of the Holly Sugar Company explained his

[69] E-39 "Mexican Beet Workers in Eaton" Folder 11.16, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[70] Dr. Draper, Grand Junction Colorado, Folder 10.4, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[71] E-40 Phill Dale, Folder 11.16, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

exasperation, “In Grand junction we pay $22 per acre. The Mexicans there can get work in fruit and potatoes in addition to beets. At Sheridan, Wyoming we pay $26 per acre. There is not much other work for the Mexicans. The Mexicans get about 90 days’ work in a six months’ season… We advance in the winter to the Mexicans. We advance to the farmer too…. in our colonies we have 20 apartments in a building. Each apartment has to rooms 14 by 14. They will accommodate about 100 people. We charge no rent and provide coal at cost. We have colonies at practically all our factories. At Torrington we are now trying to aid the Mexicans to become property owners. The Mexicans drift away from beets. About 20 to 25 percent of them leave [in a season]. The solos don't remain very well. We provide quarters and advance groceries in order to get the Mexicans to remain.”[72]

Rather than depending on companies, over time Mexicans depended on each other for jobs, food, and board. One Mexican going to fields in Michigan told Taylor, “When you go out to work on the tract or the beet fields you can always take care of yourself best. In the first place it does not take over ten to fifteen minutes to fix up something for yourself. You can always make some bread or tortillas, fry some chops or make some good soup. You can buy good Mexican things form stores you know and have your choice for a nice meal. It is always best on the [railroad] section, if you are near town, to board with a family of Mexicans you know even if you have to talk. That solves your troubles and you always eat well with them. There are always some around, it is easy to find them.”[73]

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[72] Fred Holmes, Holly Sugar Company, Colorado Springs, Folder 11.19, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[73] Mexicans in the Employment Office, Chicago, Folder 11:33, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

Organizing in the fields was notoriously difficult, with a mostly immigrant work force that was migratory in nature; moving from region to region depending on the season. The Communist Party attempted to organize Mexican beet workers in the late 1920s and in response Idar and the AFL began their own rival organizing effort. Like the cotton workers in the last chapter, the unwillingness of the main office to help and the disinclination of Mexicans to become assimilated and naturalized citizens undid the effort. Instead, Mexican families mostly used the threat of leaving as their primary negotiating weapon, sometimes even playing farmers off each other. Chester Gear put it as, "the company should provide supervision of Mexican laborer in beets. They could do it uniformly. Now the farmer may tell the Mexican what's wrong, and the Mexican says '*no sabe*' or threatens to leave. The farmer may have advanced him money and would lose it if he left, but the Mexicans are the only viable labor supply and we have got to have them." [74]

Migrants in Colorado's Cities

In Denver and other places, significant Mexican communities were created in this period. By 1930 Denver had about ten thousand Mexicans and many smaller communities had sprung up in cities across the state. The Mexican consulate had to assign a permanent consul to the city, and an organizing campaign meant there were many *Comisión Honorífica* and *Cruz Azul* offices across the state. Yet this community was also completely new. Only Pueblo had any significant Mexican-American population before this migratory wave, and even there they were a small

[74] A-11 Chester Gear, Folder 11.8, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

minority compared to the newcomers. Despite census data that shows a very high turnover rate, and the fact that most who came, did so as part of larger labor migratory circuits and did not stay very many years, the communities built a web of organizations that supported both settled and migrating Mexicans.

With its large immigrant population, it is not a surprise that Catholic civic associations were heavily involved in migrant communities. What is surprising, or at least different from other locations, was the active cooperation between organizations dominated by European immigrants and the Mexican communities in Denver. The Knights of Columbus raised large sums in aid for poor Mexican families that could not get work during the winter months, and it created the Mexican Welfare Committee of Colorado. Run by Thomas F. Mahony, the organization started primarily as a charity organization, helping people with funds, job leads, places to live and eventually moved on to larger issues. It made the first major study of the Mexican population of Colorado, and Mahony himself became a major advocate for Mexicans. He gave a series of speeches across the state defending Mexican migrants and the work they did in the state, against racism, school segregation, and efforts to restrict immigration.

The Welfare Committee investigators found that most Mexican families earned about $400 a season in the beet fields, though often less than $300, neither of which enough to last them through the off-season.[75] The committee also found that at the average price of $21-25 per acre, a single man could only earn $250 in a year, which meant that the work was predicated on women and children working in the fields as well. Children began to work in beets from as

[75] J. R Ruberson, Investigator, Industrial Comission of Colorado, September 8 1931, Folder 10:3, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

young as 8 or 9, and had mortality rates several times higher than Colorado as a whole. Most children did not go to school, and those who did almost always missed school during the beet harvest and could be gone half of the school year, despite the fact that Colorado had compulsory school attendance, (though the law had been weakened).[76]

In 1919, in the absence of any significant unions in the field, the Welfare Committee took on the task of representing workers before growers and advocating for better contracts. The committee negotiated with the Mountain State Beet Growers association, but did not make much progress. The major companies tended to agree amongst themselves what the prevailing wages would be at the beginning of the season, a type of collusion that was both illegal and widespread. During this time, in a speech, Mahony explained to an industrial congress the finding of his study, the difficulties on living on $600 a year per family, and argued that while communists had not gotten far among Mexicans, "men who suffer are conscious of their wrongs and will hold as their friends those who aid them".[77] While the Welfare Committee always strongly denied IWW presence in the fields and called it a scare tactic, they were concerned with communist, and especially Mexican leftist unions. With this he warned both Catholics and the AFL about their own failures and the need to do something about the situation in the fields.

In 1927, in consideration of efforts to restrict Mexican migration, the Welfare Committee publicly defended Mexican field workers against efforts to add them to the quota. It argued that in the state, "18,000 Spanish and Mexican hands were employed in field work. They cared for

[76] Report on Child Labor in Agriculture in Colorado, January 1932, Folder 10.3, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[77] "Wages of the Unskilled Workers in Colorado", Thomas F. Mahony, May 27, 1929, Folder 10.3, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

110,000 acres of beets, about two thirds of the entire crop. It would have been impossible to get 18,000 other workers during the growing season, and even if they were available, experience has proven that no considerable number of native laborers will do this kind of work." The Welfare Committee was among the first to argue that Mexican labor not only helped the beet industry but expanded the entire economy as their labor and economic output worked its way through the multiplier effect, "instead of depriving other laborers for work, the Mexican and other Spanish-speaking beet workers make possible the employment of thousands of other workers, skilled and unskilled, during and following the sugar manufacturing campaigns each year. In manufacturing along in Northern Colorado more than seven thousand men were employed last year; of this number only 150 were Mexican and these were on rock piles and at work no other laborer will do. In the other districts the numbers employed about 15 percent of the above. In addition, there are hundreds of men employed in the mines, on the railroad handling the large tonnage of beets, coal, supplies and the finished products, the train loads of cattle and sheep, when shipped in to be fed on the by-products and when shipped out to the packing houses. Then there is the small army of merchants and clerks, of artisans and unskilled labor in and near the factory towns, who find 'times' good with, with the help of the Mexican, sugar beet production is large, and that 'times' are 'slack' when for any reason this production falls off."[78]

The large movement of Mexicans back and forth between mining, railroad and beet work caused resentments among some beet growers. George Smith did not like those from the mines,

[78] Report: Mexican welfare Committee of the Colorado State Council of the Knights of Columbus, Folder 11.21, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

"Mexicans who have worked in coal mines aren't much good. The usefulness of the coal miner to the world is over. He is spoiled, he is used to coal wages and the eight-hour day. In beets you must work over time to make anything."[79] Ultimately however, most of the tens of thousands of Mexicans that came to Colorado left within ten years, where almost no families stayed in the census sample, as seen in chapter 2. Paul Taylor was talking with a man named Espinosa when another Mexican came. He had worked in cotton and came to Colorado to work the beet fields. He came to Denver to arrange for his family to go back to Mexico with him; he had enough to go back and thought Colorado too cold a place to stay for very long. This pattern was the norm, rather than families staying year after year, suffering and working as family groups for low wages.

As Mexican migrants left the beet fields in large numbers, many found work further north and east. Many returned to Mexico, but others went to new places before going back. This included mine and railroad work but also urban industrial work in major cities. Coming at first to major cities in order to find work and stay for the winter, Mexican *colonias* popped up in Kansas City, Salt Lake City, Milwaukee, St Louis, Chicago and Detroit. Many worked for the railroads but during World War I, and especially taking off after the steel strikes of 1919, Mexicans started to work in the steel and manufacturing industries in large numbers.

[79] A-21 George Smith, Folder 11.8, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

Migration Circuits into the upper Midwest

All roads lead to Chicago. The city is the western terminus of most every eastern railroad, and the eastern terminus of nearly every western one. In the nineteenth century Chicago emerged as the premier city of the Midwest, by drawing on transportation, markets, and the environment to create economies of scale that allowed it to become the primary destination and source of goods across a vast region. The city drew on the resources of the west, from Texas cattle to Wisconsin lumber, and almost every crop, animal, and raw mineral in-between.[80] The city grew to two million people in the early twentieth century and was at the center of a web of industrial cities across the Midwest. When Mexican migrants began to come to the area in large numbers beginning in 1917, it was as an extension of the industrial webs, which included the railroad and beet industries along with two new ones, steel and meatpacking.

Mass migration and the networks that came to drive it cannot be understood solely as the sum of individual actions and motivations but as the result of certain economic logics. The introduction of Mexican labor into the upper Midwest began as an outgrowth of migrants' spread across the southwest as companies searched for cheap labor. However, this created several new nodes in the migration system, Mexicans moved to new industries and kept coming in circular patterns long after the original reason for their migration passed. Mexican migrants to the Midwest worked and lived in a series of local, national and international circuits that made it possible to both build new communities and maintain the connections back home that drove their migration in the first place. Rather than focus on the barrio, thinking of them as an isolated place

[80] William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992).

of analysis, we should see the barrio as connected to the larger city, region, and other communities and as one of many localities people called home. They cannot be understood separately from the larger migratory networks people lived in.

The railroad industry was the first to employ Mexicans in Illinois and the upper Midwest. As early as 1910 the Santa Fe had a few workers in the Chicago branch and it was not until after 1915 that they began to be hired in large numbers. Before this, railroad companies relied on European immigrants for most of their track labor. As their use of Mexican labor spread, it became common for labor agents to send workers to the Midwest, and from there these workers would be sent even further north. By the late 1910s Mexicans had become a major presence on the railroads, and were expanding from the Santa Fe to Midwestern and Eastern based railroads that had never directly recruited them. In addition to the Santa Fe, the Rock Island and Pacific Railway shipped Mexican workers directly to Chicago. Adoption of Mexican workers was uneven in Chicago, where they made up 80% of maintenance and repair workers for the Burlington Railroad, but just 4 percent for the Terre Haute Railroad. Overall there were 5, 255 Mexican railway workers in the city by 1926.[81]

This set the stage for other industries to try their own experiments with Mexican labor, often as a result of a strike or other labor tension. In 1922 railroad workers went on strike in the largest railroad strike since the Pullman strike of 1894. As seven different unions went on the picket line, 400,000 men came off the rolls. Although most of these workers were skilled laborers, with Mexicans for the most part not participating. The long term effect of the strike was

[81] Zaragosa Vargas, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest*, 1917-1933 (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1999), 36-37.

to further increase the spread of Mexican laborers across the industry. However, it was the steel strike in 1919 that brought Mexican workers up into the Chicago and Detroit areas by the thousands.

In 1919 the Midwest experienced the largest strike since the 19th century as tens of thousands of industrial workers in steel and other industries joined a strike organized by the AFL. The strike was a disaster for the American Federation of Labor. Companies used rough tactics and even violence in suppressing the strike, often with the help of state governments, and by January of 1920, most of the strikers had given in. A large part of the defeat can be attributed to the way employers encouraged divisions along ethnic and racial lines.[82] The most important of these strategies was the mass recruitment of African-Americans and Mexicans as strike breakers.

Steel companies sent agents to the south and southwest with the express purpose of hiring African-Americans and Mexicans in order to break the strike and to ferment racial tensions. Over the course of the five-month strike, 30,000 African Americans and about 10,000 Mexicans were recruited into the industry. Agents of the major steel companies promised workers many of the same things that other industries did; free transportation, a signing bonus, higher wages than they had ever seen (as much as four to five dollars a day), and in some cases, room and board on company grounds. Steel companies used a tactic that railroads and beet companies had used to entice workers from Texas, George Edson and agent for the Bureau of Labor Statistics, reported that steel companies distributed fliers on Santa Fe railroad lines as workers were heading north working for the railroad companies or the beet fields. The companies managed to take dozens of

[82] Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), Ch. 1

workers this way.[83] The heavy recruitment effort in steel ended after the end of the strike, only to pick up again when there were other strikes. By 1925, there were about 10,000 Mexican steel workers in the Midwest, about half of whom were in Chicago, or about 14% of the industry's workers.[84]

In a well-known case, Inland Steel, in Indiana Harbor, just southeast of Chicago's city limits, aggressively recruited Mexicans during the steel strikes of the early 1920s. After the strike the company let go of many of those workers, but in 1923 Inland Steel began to hire Mexicans in large numbers again. It hired 3,600 Mexicans in 1923 and its Mexican workforce numbered well over 2,000 until the early 1930s. Mexicans made up the largest demographic group in a workforce that also included many European immigrants, some American-born whites, and a few African-Americans. Only the Ford Motor Company had more Mexicans on the payroll than Inland. George Edson estimated that in total the company's Mexican workforce sent back $1,000,000 a year in remittances alone.[85]

Inland Steel also provides us with a very good example of how networks grew out of and eventually replaced agents as the driving factor in how Mexican migration spread to new areas. While the company heavily recruited during strikes, there was a period of labor peace in the

[83] George Edson, Mexicanas in Fort Mason Iowa, in Carton 13, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California; also in Zaragosa Vargas, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1999), pg 44

[84] Zaragosa Vargas, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1999), pg 47

[85] Ibid. 48; Jorge Hernandez Fujigaki, "Mexican Steelworkers and the United Steelworkers of America in the Midwest: The Inland Steel Experience 1936-1976" (PhD Diss., University of Chicago, 1991).

1920s.[86] Mexicans came by themselves as word spread through word of mouth of the wages to be had in steel. This occurred as workers returned to Mexico or the southwest and told others. Inland Steel continued to have thousands of Mexicans on its rolls even as high turnover meant that there were very few who had stayed from the early 1920s until 1930. In fact, despite the high pay, the Mexican workforce had a turnover rate of 88% per year, which is much higher than that of the white or African-American workers, yet was also about *half* of the turnover rate of the railroads.[87] By the late 1920s most of the Inland workforce comprised those who had come up in later years.

In one example, a worker who had migrated in the first chapter to El Paso during the revolution relocated to the Midwest. In 1923 he left El Paso to come up to Chicago. As he put it, "I found no work, but a friend brought me to Indiana Harbor where I went to work in Inland Steel. … In 1925 I returned with my mother to Mexico to my native village and stayed a year, but we returned to the United States though we had planned to stay in Mexico."[88] While another worker said very simply, "I came to Indiana Harbor seven months ago. I came from Kansas City. There they told me the work was very good here and paid well."[89] In another case, an older worker in 1928 aptly summarized how migrant networks spread in the town, "I had just come

[86] Guerra Employment Agency, San Antonio, Folder 10.5, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[87] Inland Steel Company, Indiana Harbor, Mr DP Thompson, May 31, 1928, Folder 11.32, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[88] Unknown Mexican, Pg 28, Folder 10.8, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[89] "Worker at Inland Steel", Folder 11:33, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

from Mexico in 1923 when I heard from a friend of mine about the good work there is in Chicago. He had a brother who had gone from Aguascalientes in Mexico directly to work for the Inland Steel Mills. I came in the early fall and went to the plant for work the day after I got here. I went for a whole week each morning till I got on."[90] It was not uncommon to find Mexicans who had worked in other parts of the industrial network. One man told Taylor he had been working all over the borderlands from El Paso to New Mexico before going to Pueblo, Colorado, and from there to Indiana Harbor, making use of the skills he learned as a steel worker in Pueblo.[91]

Mexican settlers spread across the neighborhood and Indiana Harbor, creating a Mexican section of town complete with dozens of Mexican small businesses. Sr. Buitron, like many others in the neighborhood, never actually worked for Inland Steel. Instead, he came to take a job at a cement plant as Indiana Harbor became a draw in its own right. He had been a union organizer in Kensville, Texas, but after a strike was lost he left for Detroit and then settled in Indiana.[92] The Mexican steel worker from Aguascalientes described how the network of Mexican boarding houses and pool halls relied on strong interpersonal ties from Mexico in order to operate: "more and more families came in the neighborhood more and more of the men went out to live with them. I went out to live with a family from Torreón. They had been friends of my father and

[90] "South Chicago Studies, Old Resident" June 15, 1928, Chicago, Folder 11:33, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[91] "Old Man from Colorado", Indiana Harbor, Folder 11:33, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[92] "Buitron", 3927 Evergreen Street, Indiana Harbor, August 5, 1928 (pg 36), Folder 10.8, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

were very friendly to me. The first pool hall that I remember that was run by a Mexican was on 89th street in south Chicago".[93]

While the overall number of workers at Inland declined over the 1920s, the Mexican community around the factory continued to grow until the Great Depression. Along 89th Street, Mexican boarding houses, pool halls, grocery stores and restaurants popped up. By 1928 there were mutual aid societies, Catholic organizations and several Mexican unions in the neighborhood. It was not long before Indiana Harbor became a regular stop on the vast web that made up migratory circuits, as many people moved into and out of the city. In fact, in the archives, it was not uncommon to find interviews of workers in California or Colorado who mentioned "Indiana Harbor" or "Inland Steel" as one of their former locations, along with Kansas City, Detroit, and other industrial Midwestern locations.[94] The neighborhood in Indiana harbor had its own labor organizations for Mexicans. One of these, the *Obreros Catolicos* began to publish circulars in order to warn Mexicans about the hazards they face in the beet and other industries, which also encouraged migration into the steel industry. One organizer, after noting Youngstown Company paid the most while railroads paid the worst, talked about beets in a way only those with direct experience in the beet fields would. The beet industry sought to cheat Mexicans, he said "A poor Mexican crosses the border and signs the papers that the *enganchista* gives him. He cannot read English and does not know what he is signing. He is told that he will be shipped to where he wants, given free room and board and fare back to Mexico. They think

[93] "South Chicago Studies, Old Resident" June 15, 1928, Chicago, Folder 11:33, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

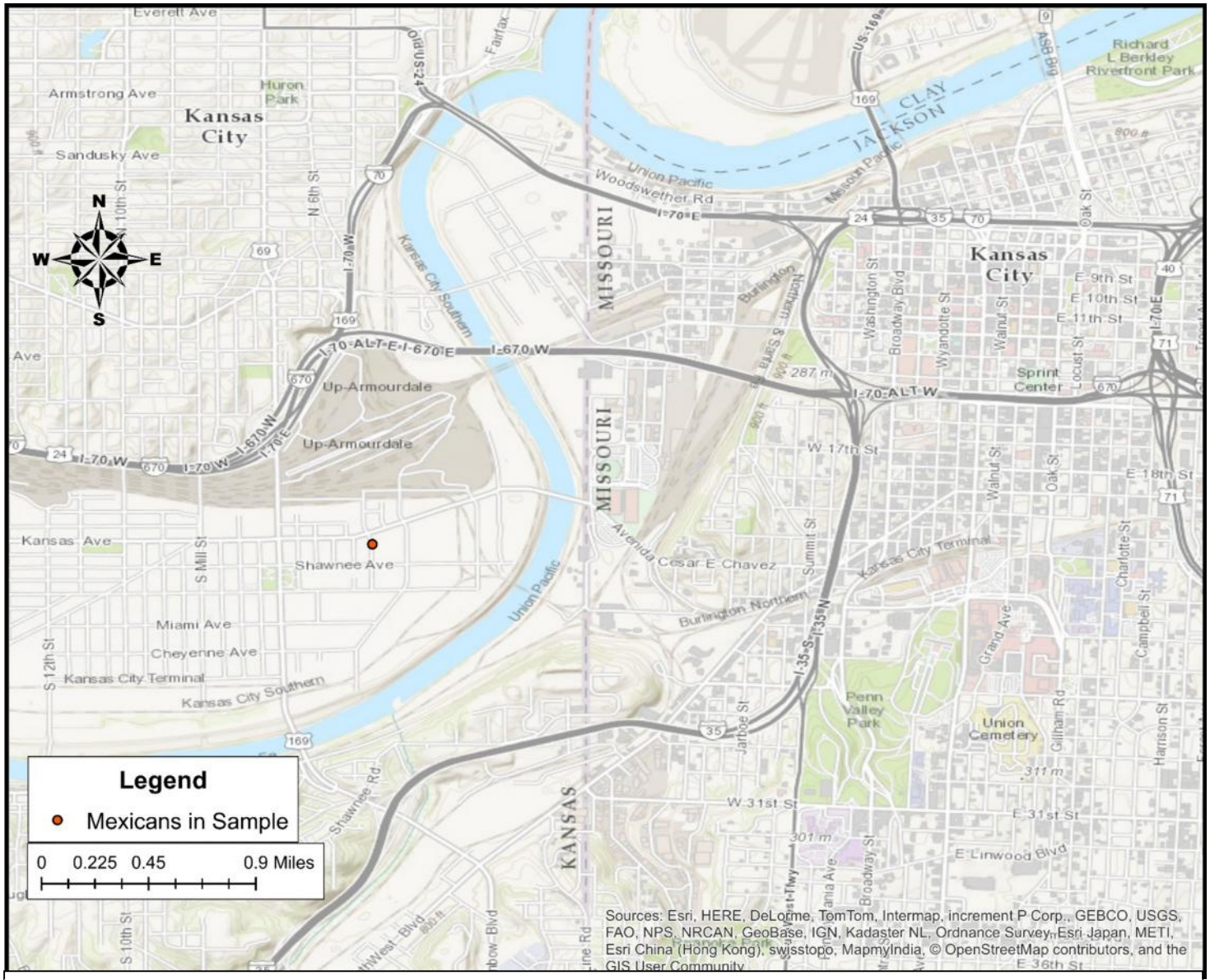
[94] For example, "Mexican Picker", Fresno, September 10, 1928, Folder 10.8, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

that they are going to work near Chicago and land some place in Iowa. It is for that reason of the many tricks and deceptions that the people who are coming up from Mexico are on the lookout for the *enganchistas* of the *betabel* (sugar beets). People who have come from here have written to Mexico about them. The new ones do not sign up for the *betabel* just to come up north but borrow money from their friends here to come up. In that way when they come up here they are their own masters and can work where it is best."[95]

Rev Galindo, a Mexican living in Indiana Harbor who spoke to Taylor, did a good job of summarizing how the community had changed, yet not changed. He said that, "in 1924 most of the Mexicans were singles. Now they are mostly families. They colony is growing. Some few come direct from Mexico; others come from other parts of the United States. They are going and coming all the time. They tire of one kind of work and look for better work. There are some Mexican bosses... The Mexicans don't want to buy property because they are expecting to return to Mexico sooner or later; so they say, why buy? Many go back to Mexico but most of them return to the United States. They don't want to be [U.S.] citizens. The countries are close; it is only two or three days to Mexico, and if they went back they would be strangers in their own country."[96]

[95] Circular of Obreros Catolicos, June 15, 1928, Chicago, Folder 11:33, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[96] Rev Galindo, Catherine House, Indiana Harbor, Folder 10.8, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California



Map 4.4. Compared with Map 3. The migratory nature of Mexican life was the most pronounced in the Midwest, where few stayed in one place for more than a few years. Only one person in the sample lived in Kansas all ten years. Map by Author, created April 29 2015. Data from Author's *Location of Mexican Sample in Kansas City 1930.*

Riding the Rail between Industries and Places

By the late 1920s moving on railroads between the industries, and between Mexico and the United States had become firmly established. Benito Rodriguez, looking back at twenty years of change noted that his Mexican employees, "after a year or two they sent for their families but if they returned home they took their families with them. They used to return [to the railroad] more than they do now…. the Mexicans did not used to migrate in Mexico. Now however they do to some extent to the cotton around Torreón."[97]

Migration in and out of major cities was a key survival strategy for Mexicans across the entire US. Kansas City and St Louis emerged in the 1920's as key centers for railroad worker recruitment, important nodes for migratory labor, yet neither developed a large permanent Mexican community. These developments did not occur because of planning but because of the logics of the migrant economy, companies and labor agencies responded to changes in the ways Mexicans migrated by relying less on new migrants and more on seasoned travelers. A Mexican in the office of J. R Silva, an employment agency in El Paso told Taylor that, "[Midwestern labor agencies] are shipping Mexicans to the railroads out of Chicago, Kansas City and Los Angeles now and fewer out of here. As long as the railroads do that, we can get plenty of Mexicans for the beet fields. The American Beet Sugar Co is shipping a few out of El Paso. We are shipping tonight to the Great Western."[98] Non-western railroad companies started to hire Mexican workers from these new migrant hubs in the Midwest, never having brought any from Mexico or

[97] Benito Rodriguez, November 22 1928, Folder 10:4, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[98] "Mexican in the Office of J. R. Silva", Folder 10:5, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

the southwest themselves. Mr. Courtney of the Illinois Central stated, "At first our Mexicans came largely from the labor agency in St Louis. We secured our Mexicans though Thomas J Watkins of the Model Labor Agency in St Louis. I remember we brought one gang of Mexicans here to work but they all left. They had left the Santa Fe at Kansas City and paid their way to St Louis."[99] That same railroad in the late 1920s began to send passes for families as well, in an attempt to create a more settled population of Mexicans in Chicago as well.[100] The Baltimore & Ohio began to take advantage of the fact that other railroads were bringing Mexican, as their Chicago yards operation hired hundreds of migrants.[101] While the CB&Q Railroad found hiring from the Midwest preferable to using agents at the border, "We began to employ Mexicans about war time. We got them from the Kansas City, St Louis, Denver, and now from Chicago…Also we got a train load of three thousand from the border which we had to return."[102] And at the C&NW an agent told Taylor that "it [was] customary to pass the Mexicans back when laid off to any city on their line if near. In 1928 all railroads wanted Mexicans, so we had to go to St. Louis and Kansas City. We shipped about 2500. Last year a good many went back to Mexico and needed to come back here."[103]

[99] Mr Courtney, Illinois Central Railroad, Folder 11:32, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[100] Mr Courtney, Chief Clerk to Engineer, Maintance of Way, Illinois Central, June 1928 Chicago, Folder 11:32, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[101] Mr Williams, Chief Clerk to Engineer, Baltimore & Ohio, Chicago terminal, Folder 11:32, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[102] Mr. T. E. Pratt, Special Agent. CB&Q Railway- Chicago, Folder 11:32, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[103] John Generella, Employment Agent and Commissary for C&NW Ry, Chicago July 11 1928, Folder 11:32, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

It was not unusual for a person to work in all three industries while going back and forth between Mexico and the United States. Francisco Mares did just that over several years, after running away with a girl from his hometown, Ocamo, Zamora, in Michoacán, his friends helped him go to New Mexico where he worked on the "*traque*" and "*betabel*" before returning back to Mexico. He returned with a few friends to El Paso but lost money before going to Miami and then Globe Arizona and becoming a mine worker and regular reader of *La Prensa*.[104] Manuel Lomelf, President de *Comisión Honorífica Mexicana* of Miami, Arizona, told Manuel Gamio a similar story. He grew up outside of Guadalajara and went to California as a railroad worker when his father died, later he went to New Mexico and became an expert miner. In 1921 he repatriated to Mexico "when Obregon said he wanted all the Mexicans back," in the first short lived repatriation program, and was a manager in mines in Chihuahua while he lived in Torreón. However after a disagreement with a supervisor over the construction of a mine he left for Miami where he lived in 1927 as a prominent member of the Mexican community and head of a *mutualista*.[105] Another Mexican told an interviewer, "It is not five years ago since I left San Luis Potosí for the US. I had an uncle who lived in the city of Pueblo and I directed myself there. As soon as I got to Texas I had to work so it was the track for me. Since then I have worked from the south to Illinois and in Ohio and Michigan just lately."[106]

[104] Francisco Mares, VIDAS, BANC FILM 2322 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[105] Manuel Lomelf, VIDAS, BANC FILM 2322 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[106] Mexicans in the Employment Office, Chicago, Folder 11:33, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

Even more travelled, Jose S. Rodriguez "came first to a copper mine in New Mexico; then to LA. He worked in Imperial Valley and Fresno. Made good money in grapes. Lived in San Francisco … Returned South. Came to Garden City, Kansas for sugar beets, because uncle was there. His mother came up to the US to visit him, but went back to Mexico. In 1923 he came to Chicago before Illinois Steel shipped in Mexicans."[107] While Antonio Herrera not only migrated in the US, but Mexico as well, making various trips until he finally brought his family to Chicago. "I first came the US in 1916. Then I was in Laredo, Texas where I worked on a farm. I went back to Mexico during the war and worked in an oil refinery during the war. Wages were good and there was no reason to leave Mexico. In 1920 I came to this country again and worked in the steel mills at Joliet. The wages were good for a while, but then they started to cut. From there I went to work on the railroads in Kansas. I worked around Topeka for a while. In 1924 I went to Mexico and brought my family."[108]

Other migrants could not go back to Mexico, but they stayed connected in other ways, sending money back to their home communities. Dan Rios, from Zacatecas where he had been a silver miner, met Taylor in Colorado and contracted 25 acres of beets with his family. With the help of a Ford car he owned, "He worked in California in grapes around Fresno. He went up there from El Paso for two months and returned. He says the working season is longer in California but there are better wages for a short time here. He prefers California but hasn't the money to go there. He has worked on the Santa Fe and knows the Imperial Valley. The Mexicans

[107] Jose S Rodriquez. South Chicago. Andres Frejias and a third Mexican, June7, 1928, Folder 11:32, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[108] Antonio Herrera, Folder 11:33, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

questioned say that perhaps they will go back to Mexico after a while if they have the money. But they are quite vague. Rios claims he has $900 which he sent back there."[109]

Francisco Carpio had worked with Jesus France and the Mexican consulate to set up the health association, *Cruz Azul* in Pueblo Colorado and had seen this new migratory circuit from its early days in 1908, when he came to work on the Santa Fe. Reflecting on the migration from Mexico into Colorado and back to Mexico, "the Mexicans are treated royally in Pueblo. But now the steel workers are modernizing their plants so the Mexican loses out. The Mexicans are low in seniority because they are unstable; therefore, they are laid off first. The steel plant has nice foreman, comfort stations, and is well equipped. The Mexicans come to steel from the beets or railroads… The Mexicans like the work in sugar beets pretty well, but it does not last enough. They get a lump sum in payment. The Mexican wants a quick way to progress; so be buys a car." Carpio acknowledged that the idea of saving enough to stay in Mexico was difficult so that many stayed in the economy of migratory labor by circumstance rather than choice, "We expect to go back after the season, but we don't have money to go. Then we are not satisfied when we go back to Mexico so we return to the United States…. if there were a big boom in Mexico the Mexicans would go back."[110]

Increasingly Mexican migrants used railways and beets as a stepping stone to work in industrial centers. This was the result of people looking for work through networks. As one Mexican who worked for a group called *Obreros Catolicos* in Indiana Harbor put it, "it is not a

[109] Dan Rios, E-9 Employment, Folder 11.16, Box 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[110] Francisco Carpio, 1042, Folder 10.8, Box 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

question with the Mexicans which industry they prefer, but mainly two things. It is "where can I find work soonest" and "where do they pay the best?" Now when they come here they like to work for the Youngstown Company because it pays they best. But if there is no work soon they will work at the mills or the car repair plant. They keep away from the car foundry as long as they can. … But even that is better than the track. They track is one of those places of last resort. As for the beet fields they are only for those in despair, and the greenhorns that come up from Mexico."[111]

In their studies of the upper Midwest, and Michigan in particular, Zaragoza Vargas, Juan Garcia, and Dennis Nodín Valdez found many of the same patterns. Starting in 1915 Michigan beet growing companies began using recruiters and special railway cars to bring Mexican workers from Texas cotton fields. By 1927 there were over forty thousand Mexicans working in the state, mostly around Saginaw but also in the northern part of the state, making up 75% of the sugar beet workforce. Brought there by companies and independent contractors, Mexicans very quickly started leaving the fields and going into industrial employment, especially in the winter. Some left because of the bad conditions, while others never made it to the fields at all, as one person put it "We were friends. [The man I met on the train' already knew Detroit, so I went to Detroit with them, preferring to work there than in the fields."[112] Many of these agriculture

[111] Circulo de Obreros Católicos, 1928, Folder 11:33, Box 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[112] García, *Mexicans in the Midwest*, 1900-1932, 18.

workers also began using cars to move from field to field, and back to Mexico, where they could sell the car at a profit. Others took back people and goods in their cars.[113]

Vargas in particular has argued that Detroit and the beet fields in Michigan acted as a single system, feeding workers to each other in regional labor circuits. This was also true of the Midwest as a whole, where urban enclaves were supported by large populations of agricultural workers. By the late 1920s Detroit had a large community of Mexicans living there, with the bulk working in automobile factories. 4,000 works for the Ford Motor Company with another 200 Mexican attending its engineering school. These workers supported thousands of other people and jobs, with the community numbering between fifteen and twenty thousand in the 1920s. Many of these workers had prior experience in factories, often in other places in the Midwest. And like Chicago, the high turnover rate meant that after some years most jobs were gained through networks and selling of cards rather than labor recruiters or efforts of the companies.[114]

Between Here and Home

Back in Mexico, the Governor of Aguascalientes noticed an exodus of workers to a single industry, and one company in particular. By reading the reports that he had been compiling, sent by municipal presidents who issued passports to those who went to the United States, it is

[113] Dennis Nodin Valdes, *Al Norte: Agricultural Workers in the Great Lakes Region, 1917-1970,* (Austin: Univ of Texas Pr, 1991), 25.

[114] Zaragosa Vargas, Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933 (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1999), 1-85.

possible to recreate this pattern. One typical entry "Mr Ignacio Rodriguez is going to Miami Arizona to be with family…", and the next line would be his friend, "Mr. J Feliz Mendoza is going to the same place with the object of working for the Miami Copper Co., with pay of approximately three dollars a day."[115] In another case from Aguascalientes, a single town had one group of people leave for Jerome Arizona to work for the United Verde Copper Company, and another leave to work for the Union Pacific Railroad, on the same day. While they did not say if they had been in the US before nor not, it seems unlikely they would have such specific information if they had not been.[116] The United Verde Copper Company seems to have been a particular destination of circular migrants; later that year, Gonzalo Hernandez also declared his intention of going to Jerome Arizona in order to join his two brothers, Salvador y Samuel, who were already working for the company.[117] Circuits had developed that were guiding people into these industries from central Mexico into the Midwest. By 1929 many of the people who left had been in the United States before and were taking relatives up north, not only that, but they often already had a job lined up and even knew how much money they would make. The next chapter examines these dynamics in Aguascalientes and central Mexico more closely.

The relationship of industries, urban spaces, and migration has always been more complicated than generally acknowledged by scholars of migration. Cities are much more than isolated or local markets, San Antonio, Chicago, Los Angeles, like the Zona Media, Celaya, or

[115] Translation by Me, Junio 12 de 1929, 4-352-1929-471- AL GOBERNADOR DEL ESTADO DEL AGUASCALIENTE, Archivo Histórico del Instituto Nacional de Migración, México D.F.

[116] 4-532-1930-615 GOBERNADO DE AGUASCALIENTES- INFORMA SOBRE EMIGRACION, Archivo Histórico del Instituto Nacional de Migración, México D.F.

[117] Ibid, Poder ejecutivo del Estado- Aguascalienes: Dept de Gobernacion

Monterrey, have never existed in isolation. They are the hubs of regions that draw and send migrants to certain industries while sending large numbers of migrants between each other. Far more people moved among the industries that banded spaces far apart than ever stayed in only one place after coming to the US. The economy of labor migration exists as the structural conditions of the industries that depended on migratory labor, but is shaped and co-dependent on the micro-economic logics that worked within migrant communities, which I call the migrant economy, the subject of the next chapter. The push of a hard rural life, the push of violence and hunger, pull of jobs, the pull of social and economic freedoms, the pull of family, the pull of opportunity, have always been the contradictory impulses that drive people to leave home. Be it seasonal, yearly, or decade long stays, many Mexican migrants lived a transnational existence that spanned these spaces and beyond.

Most of the Mexicans who moved into industrial and mining jobs in the 1910s and 1920s stayed at the bottom of the ladder. The combination of job interruptions, migration back to Mexico, and simple racism meant that few ever achieved all the goals they had when they left home. Those that did permanently settle in the US had to work long hard hours to make even the smallest headway, but they tended to have their family join them after a period. While it is their story that has received the most attention from scholars in the period, it must be remembered that they were a relative minority where migration was a constant fact of life. More common was the case of the Inland Steel worker who had been back to Mexico twice, who that told a social worker, "the reason so many of us like to go to Mexico is to forget our work and our troubles up here. You must think of your work and the money you earn every minute of the time up here.

They will not let you forget it. Mexicans weary of their work, its hardness, and go back to Mexico to enjoy a life [that is] much more restful."[118]

[118] "Worker at Inland Steel," Folder 11.33, Box 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

CHAPTER 5

Entre Aquí y Allá

The Paths of Circular Migration in Central Mexico 1920 -1930

Migrating in the 1920s was not easy yet it was also, if not routine, then increasingly common. After a person decided to migrate, perhaps urged by friends or distant relatives who had gone before, he or she would have to go through various steps. A person would have to raise money for the trip and maybe pay a coyote. This entailed asking relatives for funds or borrowing from a local elite or broker. A person would then have to ask the local government official for a *salvaconductos*, a pass, and travel to the nearest railroad station. There, they may or may not be asked for documents proving they could legally migrate to the US. They then had to go through a series of stations where, if they lacked money to migrate legally they had to avoid the Departamento de Migración, the Mexican border patrol. After reaching the border, people utilized a number of ways to get across without documents. While in the US they might send remittances back or save money to return with. When the person returned, they usually returned in groups with other people who made the journey part of the way with them. Some might return with money or goods, though most did not return with enough to settle down permanently. A person would then face a choice: to return to the US to work or not.

Circular migration was not characterized by a single type of experience but was rather a range of actions people took in response to the situation in front of them. This circular migration could be regular, with many seasonal workers along the borderlands going back and forth every year or even every season. However, it would also be very irregular, with people returning after a year or two or ten in the US, with an event like a death, deportation, or wedding precipitating this

return. Whether a particular person made further trips north, or even moved north permanently was highly dependent on the location, industry, and family circumstance of the migrant. While most Mexican migrants in the United States planned to return at some point, the actual return was often irregular, after some years away, and at least 40% did not return at all until the Great Depression. However, most migrants circulated within the US and at some point circulated back into Mexico. The majority of the Mexican sample population discussed in Chapter 2 were no longer in the sample ten years later, most likely because they had gone back to Mexico. In returning, circular migrants played a critical part in making the migrant economy possible. It was through them that town-based interpersonal networks functioned and allowed others with less social and economic capital to go north as well.

As the Cristero War and structural problems in the Mexican economy further encouraged the migration, people used the resources of their communities to go north. In doing so they drove a migrant economy based on information and remittances. By 1920, a tenth of Mexico's population was in the United States, and circular migration from both sides of the border increased markedly, and now included women, children, and families. Building on rhetoric that saw Mexico as the rightful place for Mexicans, the Mexican government undertook an unprecedented effort at migration law enforcement in these years. The Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE), and Departamento de Migración issued directives and propaganda, which migrants mostly ignored in favor of less official, more informal, and sometimes chance word-of-mouth information sharing or exchanges that they saw as more directly relevant to their lives. Looking at how and why migrants chose to make the journey north, starkly illustrates the disconnect between federal officials' policy desires and the needs of migrants and local migrant-sending regions. Examining the cases of Guanajuato, Aguascalientes, and San Luis Potosí, I

show how migration came to be seen as a solution to many of the problems Mexicans faced after the Mexican Revolution, becoming an important way to secure a livelihood in central Mexico.

Evan as migration came to be seen as a solution by many communities, it was beginning to be taken seriously as a problem by the Mexican federal government. However, the Mexican government's attempts to regulate and curtail migration primarily show how deeply ingrained migratory circuits were becoming by the late 1920s. State immigration bureaucracy was weak, understaffed, and underfunded, making enforcement difficult. As consequence, the relative ease with which migrants could bypass federal checks on immigration meant that federal impediments factored less in migrants' calculations about whether to migrate than more immediate and local concerns such as family economic need and regional armed conflicts. Additionally, transportation and migrant trafficking businesses widely profited from migration and served to further undermine effective enforcement. Ultimately, various sectors in Mexican society from the railroads to local governments had an interest in migration, and much of the infrastructure that supported migration proved adept at resisting pressure from the Departamento de Migración.

In the 1920s, internal tensions arose in the project of building the Mexican State, even as the government increased its capacity to govern and regulate migration, and some land reform eased the pressures to migrate north – migration increased and more people began to participate in the migrant economy. This chapter makes use of the archives of the Instituto Nacional de Migración (Departamento de Migración at the time) and the Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE) in addition to interview collections and state records. After the passage of the *Ley de Migración* in 1926 Mexican agencies sought to regulate migration and in doing so they collected a vast amount of information on movement into and out of Mexico. Moving between

governmental actors and the migrants that the Departamento de Migración tried to document and increasingly control, this chapter illustrates the limits of institutional history in capturing the totality of this movement and the limits of focusing on the state when writing about what is fundamentally a social process.

An examination of the way in which Mexican migration expanded into a major phenomenon in central Mexico makes clear that there is not a separation between economics, violence, policies, and the trends on the ground. While theoretical models of migration primarily focus economics and networks, they have yet to account for the role of violence or politics in shaping the changing the ways migrant networks functioned. The case of Mexico in this era makes it clear that migration takes place on the local and personal level, where the distinction between an economic and a political migrant is meaningless. The violence of the Revolution and later the Cristero War are not separable from the other causes of migration from central Mexico. In central Mexico as in other places, the migrant economy never existed outside of the particular political and economic circumstances that shaped every other aspect of Mexican society. Migration does not only occure because of the push/pull factores and economic conditions of a location, but also because of the conditions created by previous migrants leaving in the first place. Migration evolved from something that a few people did to something that many community members participated in. Drawing on interpersonal networks, migration was a deeply social process that tied towns and regions to each other, even if they were thousands of miles away. This new economy made it easier to move, but also tied many families and towns into continuous migrations in order to achieve economic stability. The migrant economy of remittances and circular movement, in spite of the actions of governments, drew more and more people into its orbit and in doing so drove further migration north.

The Rhetoric of Migration in the Public Sphere

In Mexico City the post-revolutionary state had to contend with the fact that a tenth of the population lived north of the Rio Bravo. In the 1920s a public discourse developed around migration, it argued that migration to the US was betrayal of revolutionary ideals at the time when the country needed people the most. A counter discourse developed that emphasized the benefits of migration, a group of public intellectuals led by anthropologist Manuel Gamio argued that migrants learned democratic and capitalistic practices in the north and returned as modern progressive citizens better able to build the nation when they returned home. Either way, both sides saw Mexico as the rightful place of the Mexican migrants and rarely noticed the ways circular migration was becoming entrenched as a way of life.

Much of the contours of the public debate on migration has been studied by other scholars, such as Lawrence Cardoso, Francisco Balderrama, Laurencio Sanguino, Kelly Hernandez, and others. My point in looking at them again is to point out the way they shaped action by the government and reaction by migrants. This was the rhetoric migrants faced when they returned to Mexico, what they had to respond to when they were writing to their families, singing corridos, responding in print, and interacting with the government.

Manuel Gamio is perhaps the best known scholar of Mexican migration in the early twentieth century. While he was pro-repatriation and colonization, it was mainly because he believed migrants had a lot to offer Mexico. As he put it,

> "In fact, these Mexicans have acquired during their stay in the Unites States valuable experience in agriculture or industry; they have learned to handle machinery and modern tools; they have discipline and steady habits of work. Moreover, their material and cultural requirements are generally greater than they were then they left Mexico. Having risen in the economic scale, they have been able to better themselves not only as to food, clothing, living-quarters, and acquisition of tools and furniture, but they have also

> abandoned, wholly or partly, *fanatical* religion; they tend to join together in cooperative or charitable organizations, and they have acquired the habit of reading the newspapers. They frequently have savings in the bank, and perhaps a small house and the lot upon which it stands."[1]

In theory, as migrants returned, these traits would advance Mexico economically, socially, and democratically. He saw returning migrants as a force that could develop the country along the lines many elites who supported the revolution desired, liberal and secular. His primary interest was in Mexico's development. He saw all of the Mexicans who were settling in the US as a troubling trend and advocated policies in the US that would discourage permanent settlement (but also advocated better working conditions). For Mexico he promoted policies that would ease their return, make it harder to leave, and encouraged the creation of colonies of returnees, where they would be less influenced by traditional ideas.[2] While his books were not published in Spanish at the time, his reports and ideas were read throughout the government, including the SRE and Departamento de Migracíon. His ideas became much more influential in the 1930's when the Cardenas administration took many of these ideas up as a response to the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of people during the Great Depression.

While within the government, a group of public intellectuals and bureaucrats wielded outsized influence on the state's official policy, many others within the state worked to undermine the policy. Andres Landa y Pina, head of Migraion Serive department in Gobernación wrote about migrants in *La Migración y Protección de Mexicanos en el Extranjero*, where like many of the elite in the US, he urged Mexicans to stay home and contribute to Mexico and avoid being discriminated against. The same was true of Giberlo Loyo's *Emigración de Mexicanos a*

[1] Manuel Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States; A Study of Human Migration and Adjustment*, New edition edition (New York: Dover Pubns, 1971), 184.

[2] Ibid. 185-196.

los Estados Unidos. Meanwhile, Alfono Fabila's *El Problema de la Emigración de Obreros y Campesinos Mexicanos,* where using his account of traveling to Los Angeles he records widespread discrimination. His writings were distributed to Mexican consuls. Within the Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, General Consul of San Antonio Enrique Santibanez's views were the most influential. He published a collection of essays in Excelsior in Mexico City where he argued that Mexicans probably didn't learn important skills, or move up economically when in the US, and that higher wages were the primary factor in migration.[3] This led him to conclude that the Mexican government should discourage migration, and encourage repatriation where possible. And so the government's official view remained solidly anti-emigration and all sides in elite circles agreed that the return of Mexicans was for the best, even if they could not agree on why.

El Departamento de Migración

In the early 1920s, the Mexican government sought to regulate and curb the growth of migration, seeking to cut down on undocumented entries while keeping open paths for limited legal entry. However, despite unprecedented policing, the Mexican government could not control migration or its growth. When Alvaro Obregon left office, more than half a million of his countrymen were in the US instead of the country of their birth, despite a short lived repatriation effort in 1921. Well aware of the limits of government power, having played a significant role in these repatriation efforts as *Secretario de Gobernación*, the new president of Mexico Plutarco Calles, sought to build a modern bureaucracy and police force to regulate migration. *The Secretaria de Relaciones Extierores* grew its precense in the United States, and in 1926 the *Ley*

[3] Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 163-166.

de Migración of 1926, established the Departamento de Migración within *Gobernación.* Along with the SRE the Departamento de Migración sought to control the migration in conjunction with their US counterparts who had just established their own border patrol.

Several scholars have looked at the creation of the Departamento de Migración and its operations in the 1920s and 1930s. Kelly Lytie Hernandez notably has pointed out that reaching the border was not the beginning of a migrant's evasion of border guards, but the culmination of it, as migrants had to find ways around the Departamento de Migración's agents along railroad routes and the northern frontier. Under US pressure, the Departamento de Migración went beyond Mexico's own immigration laws that banned workers from leaving if they did not have a contract (Article 123 of the Constitution, see Chapter 1), and began to ban migration from people who did not meet all the requirements of entry into the US, in particular the head tax and illiteracy provisions that were now criminally punishable in the US. In other words, by the late 1920s, the Departamento de Migración had created a "system in which Mexican officers enforced the provisions of US immigration law."[4] This enforcement was done through three methods, according to Hernandez: "Mexican officials circulated propaganda to discourage people from trekking north if they could not qualify for legal entry into the United States. For those who made the journey anyways, Mexican officials stationed at train depots questioned arriving migrants and attempted to turn back those unable to comply with US entry requirements. Finally, whenever possible officers… patrolled the border to stop Mexican workers from illegally entering the United States by enforcing the anti-smuggling provisions of Mexico's 1926

[4] Kelly Lytie Hernandez, "Persecuted Like Criminals": The Politics of Labor Emigration and Mexican Migration Controls in the 1920s and 1930s," Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies v 34, n 1 (Spring 2009), 232.

Migration Law."[5] Yet despite their attempts, Departamento de Migración agents at the border found the difficulties they encountered in stopping migration practically insurmountable.

At the border, the Departamento de Migración tried a series of tactics to respond to the situation but were ultimately ineffective before the Great Depression. The records of the Departamento de Migración show that much of the agency's attention was focused on the smuggling of contraband and people. *Coyotes* had established complicated strategies by the mid-1920s. To evade train inspectors, they would take migrants to smaller stations without Departamento de Migración agents in border towns where migrants could rent rooms in boardinghouses and cars to get them to points far from the official crossings. Boats would then ferry migrants across the Rio Bravo.[6] Consuls in the borderlands, Departamento de Migración agents at the border and those in Mexico City saw coyotes as their primary target. In reports expressing the need for agents and railroad passes, they regularly pointed to coyotes as the reasons migration was uncontrolled.[7] Though in correspondence with the chamber of commerce in Nuevo Laredo, they also acknowledged that the new regulatory regime had created many of the problems they were trying to address: "This system has provided opportunity for unscrupulous men, usually known by the nickname *Coyotes*, to make immoral and inhuman traffic cruelly exploiting these braceros."[8] The *Secretaria de Gobernación* had been issuing public circulars warning of the dangers of migrating for years, these efforts were expanded under

[5] Hernandez, "Persecuted Like Criminals," 221.

[6] Hernandez, "Persecuted Like Criminals," 228.

[7] El Visitador de Migración, Mach 2 1927, "Se Solicita de gestión con los Ferrocarriles la expedición de tarjetas-pases anuales", 4-123-1927-2 Pases Personales de Ferrocarril Departamento de Migración, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF

[8] Translations by Daniel Morales. Cámara Nacional de Comercio de Nuevo Laredo, March 13 1928, 4-352-1928-219, Cámara de Comerciado de Nuevo Laredo Los Braceros Emigrantes Los Coyotes, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF

the Departamento de Migración in the 1920s. As Hernandez illustrates, these public circulars focused on pointing out the dangers of coyotes and illegal crossings, showing the ways people became victims to these human traffickers.[9] By focusing on coyotes, the Departamento de Migración and SRE publically cast the issue of stopping undocumented migration as trying to protect their countrymen from exploitation rather than stopping migration.

While Hernandez has pointed to the US as the reason for this campaign, the Mexican government's campaign was not a simple reflection of US policy. The federal government and the Departamento de Migración in particular had their own reasons to regulate migration. The Departamento de Migración ran its campaign largely free of US influence and was mostly reacting to pressure from local politicians at border towns, and public scandals in the press. Again and again, border politicans petitioned the Departamento de Migración to stop the continual flow of migrants from central Mexico, which crowded bordertowns. Local politicans, the SRE, and the agency were also concerned about migration going the other direction, especially when large scale deportations led to large amounts of destitute migrants ending up at border towns. The Departamento de Migración would have to pay to send to their hometowns, and the agency never had enough funds to take care of such migrants. Considering the litany of abuses and dangers migrants frequently faced, this was not an unreasonable concern.

Both internally and externally, the Departamento de Migración look a paternalistic attitude towards migrants. Both the SRE and Departamento de Migración saw migrants as victims duped by labor agents, *coyotes*, fliers, and overly optimistic information from the North. Seeking to curb this, they created a counter narrative with fliers and information that told people not to migrate unless they could afford to do so legally, lest misfortune should befall them. Yet

[9] Hernandez, "Persecuted Like Criminals," 228.

in doing so they failed to acknowledge the difficulty of legal migration for the average person, and how their efforts helped those of the US government. Ultimately, the campaign was unsuccessful as more people were persuaded by the information of returning migrants, those they knew, rather than the government, and figured the risk of failure was worth the reward. When one steps back from the border and focus on how Departamento de Migración sought to curb migration in the interior of Mexico, one sees how the relationship between agents, migrants, and middlemen shaped the flow and conditions of migration.

The spread of information was as difficult to control as the growth of circular migration in central Mexico. In trying to control both the information and the flow of people, however, the Mexican government collected a lot of information on migration patterns. The operations of the Departamento de Migración and the *Secretaria de Gobernación* -- in creating interior offices, working with railroads, and working with local governors--showed the back and forth that existed between migrants and the institutions that sought to control them. Agents had to balance various interests as they sought to enforce policy. They could sometimes aid migrants going north. They likewise often worked with local municipal presidents and governors to collect information about the flow of migrants, but at other times found themselves on the other side as local governments encouraged some types of migration. Different people sought their own ends in dealing with these instituions, as seen in these interactions. The dynamic between businesses, local governments, state government, and federal agencies shows that the state was not monolithic in responding to migration, but instead negociated and renecogiated with each other and with migrants on the ground.

The Departamento de Migración, the Mexican Railway, and Circular Migration Patterns

The nationalization of the railways began during the last years of the *Porfiriato* with the creation of the Mexican National Railway (N de M) and continued to be the primary way by which migrants headed north and back throughout the entire period, even with the advent of automobile travel. The railway, while owned by the Mexican Government, was functionally independent and ran for profit. As a result, the railway was much more interested in ticket sales than enforcing regulations. It was for this reason that local, state, and federal officials paid a lot of attention to the railroad and the flow of migrants through it. The government officials sought to bring the railroad into the regulatory system by having rail agents enforce its policies, and in turn, US immigration law. However, with strong conflicts of interest in selling tickets to migrants, the railway proved a poor partner in this endeavor. What developed was a negotiation among officials, migrants, and institutions, all of which sought different ends. Likewise, by examining this back and forth, we can see how circular migration patterns changed to adopt to these new regulations.

Because the Mexican government had to purchase passes for Departamento de Migración agents to ride on Mexican National Railway lines, their movements offer a broad outline of the routes people were taking in the mid 1920s. Most of these were for far northern lines in the borderlands but also included all lines coming to Monterrey, especially the line south to San Luis Potosí. But agents also patrolled lines going north out of Mexico City, lines out of Colima, Leon, Aguascalientes and especially Guadalajara.[10] Patrols went far beyond the border, hundreds of

[10] 4-123-1930-13 Expediente relativo de pases de Ferrocarril NA is one example, but Series 123 has hundreds, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF

miles south into central Mexico, essentially enforcing US immigration law throughout the country, something its US counterpart did not do in this era.

Knowing exactly where the immigration originated, the Departamento de Migración and its predecessor the Migration Service, established stations at Monterrey, Torreón, Guadalajara and Irapuato where people could get paperwork to go north legally. Along the borderlands at Matamoros, Nuevo Laredo, Irapuato, Empalme de González, Torreón, Saltillo and Monterrey they established checkpoints, where they boarded trains and inspected for papers among the migrants heading north. They were supposed to check that prospective migrants knew how to read and write, had sufficient money, had civil documents for themselves and their family members—in other words, that they would be able to legally enter the US. In explaining this policy to President Calles, the Departamento de Migración argued that "due to the circumstances that have resulted in a steady increase in the migration of Mexican workers, we must not only check papers at the borders, but at stations and along railways in the interior … as people rejected from the US have placed a heavy burden on the public."[11] However, expanded checking proved difficult under the Departamento de Migración's small budget and staff. The Departamento de Migración repeatedly ran out of funds for passes for its agents to travel and inspect trains as they were moving. The Mexican National railways, dependent on migrants for its passenger trains heading north, was never more than a reluctant participant in migration controls.

Clearly, more needed to be done. Again and again, local officials in border towns as well as in towns in the interior wrote to the Departamento de Migración asking it to take stronger

[11] "Memorándum para el Señor Presidente de la Republica," Dec 9 1925, 4-123-1926-1, Para la Dirección de Ferrocarriles nacionales de México Anexo NA, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF. Translation by author. [I am assuming these records are in spanish and you have translated them?]

actions against migration. At Reynosa, officials repeatedly complained about the activities of *coyotes*, that surveillance on board trains was simply not working, and that migrants could simply get tickets to Camargo and then from Camargo to Reynosa and the US. [12] The municipal president of Nuevo Laredo repetedly sent letters to the Departamento de Migración asking for more agents, investigations and enforcement against *coyotes* an labor contractors (*enganchadores*), which were often seen as the same time.[13] Their sentiments were repeated in letters throughout border towns and from Monterrey.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, a whole industry developed in Nuevo Laredo to support migration to the US. Some of these activities were legal, others were not. In a report asking the Departamento de Migración to deal with migrants before they reached the border, the local government described the extent of migration-related activities. *Coyote* smuggling houses had popped up where people could be smuggled across the border. But even legal migration created its own economy where people charged exorbitant prices for every step of the process, from stays in hotels to photographs and railroad tickets. The Departamento de Migración saw border towns and those who facilitated migration as full of dangers. In one report, agent Jose Inez Perez, painted a picture where arriving migrants were besieged by "drivers of all vehicles, try to bring them to certain accommodations, photographic workshops, where they charge exaggerated amounts for accommodation, meals and work disproportionate photographic, because those amounts, the owners of the establishments, a high commission paid to drivers and coachmen." When migrants try to emigrate, they often can't pass legally into the US, at which point "hotel

[12] 4-123-1929-4, Solicitudes de Pases para el Servicio de Migración al border de los Ferrocarriles nacional sin Descuento, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF

[13] Telegram, March 30, 1927, 4-352-2-1927- 22A Delg. De Migracion, N. Laredo- Solicita se Restringa, deteniendoloes en Saltillo, S. Luis Potosi y Monterrey, a los braceros emigrantes, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF

owners offer their services to send telegrams asking for money and help, and they charge double amounts or triple the true cost of telegrams and commission that they are paid. All the lodges and hotels, are attended regularly and daily smugglers or "*coyotes*", making proposals to the braceros not to pay the high rates of immigration, and offer them passage across the boder by fording the Rio Bravo. The amounts charged for subsequent smuggling, ranging from ten, twenty and thirty pesos…" Calling *coyotes* a "true mafia", he saw both smugglers and the businesses that profited off the trade as exploiters of easily doped Mexican migrants.[14]

Yet there was little that could be done to stop the large scale business of migration, small businesses, hotels, doctors, labor agents, and many others widely profited from circular migration, *coyotes* were only the most visible part of that economy. The chamber of commerce at Laredo tried to shift this business to themselves by printing "daily fliers to be distributed among the working people who arrive for purposes of migration, which is to publicize the address of hotels, guest houses, pictures and ticket outlets for tickets, stating what is charged regularly for passengers to take advantage of such information" and also hiring a crier to read this information in the streets.[15] This and other reports moved the Departamento de Migración towards new rules that placed the burden of proof on the railroads.

Departamento de Migración agents on board trains were meant to act as a compliment to the measures the Mexican Railways themselves took to limit migration. Since at least 1925 the government had asked the railway to limit the number of tickets it sold to potential migrants, but

[14] Translations by Daniel Morales. Jose inez Perez, December 14 1928, Jose Inez Perez to Secretaria de Gobernacion, 4-352-2-1928-52A Oficio Mayo, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF

[15] Translations by Daniel Morales. Cámara Nacional de Comercio de Nuevo Laredo, March 13 1928, 4-352-1928-219, Cámara de Comerciado de Nuevo Laredo Los Braceros Emigrantes Los Coyotes, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF

it took a very long struggle to get the company to cooperate. In fact, the physical record of their relationship from 1925 to 1935 shows that cooperation was hardly the proper word. Reluctant to cut off its own revenue stream, railroad officials gave lip service to cooperating with the Departamento de Migración. They occasionally distributed memos and circulars within the company saying that people should work with agents and not sell tickets to migrants who lacked all the proper documents. These papers had little effect on the people who sold tickets, accepted them, and ran the railway.

Departamento de Migración offices in central Mexico were meant to alert offices up the line if tickets were sold towards the border. The results were not surprising. Just looking at a single month in a single place, the railroad hub of Monterrey in Nuevo Leon, gives a sense of the number of tickets being sold. From October 26th to November 26th 1925, in order of arrival to station, groups of migrants came from the following cities, in some cases multiple times: Ocotlán Jal, Guadalajara Jal, Salvatierra Gto, Comonfort Gto, Gòmez Farías Coah, Comonfort Gto, Lagos Jal, Matehuala SLP, Pedrito Jal, Colima Col, San Salvador Zac, Cardenas SLP, San Miguel de Allende Gto, Rio Verde SLP, Salvatierra Gto, Ataquiza Jal, San Salvador Zac, Morelia Mich, Uruapan Mich, Cerritos SLP, Lagos y Pedrito San Salvador Zac, Matehuala SLP, Salvatierra Gto, San Francisco de Rincón Gto, San Luis Potosí SLP, Cerritos SLP, and Ataquiza Jal. With an agent complaining on the 25th of November that at "Matehuala, San Salvador, San Miguel de Allende, and Gòmez Farías (railroad agents) continue selling second class tickets without restriction to points north of Saltillo."[16]

[16] File 4-352-1925-1F, Agente del Servicio de Emigración en Saltillo Coahuila, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF. Translation by author.

As early as 1925 the Departamento de Migración knew that the policy was not working. The agency struggled to allocate scarce resources and people to all lines where migrants were traveling and in internal memos suggested that the policy of placing agents onboard trains was not effective without railroad support.[17] Various plans were floated, some similar to what those on the US side were proposing, like a bond and registration on all labor agents. Meanwhile, tickets continued to be sold, and the railroad ticket vendors in Mexico City were even telling migrants that they could buy tickets straight to Laredo and arrange their papers to cross there without any problems.[18]

One-way people got around agents on trains was to travel by automobile. On multiple occasions, Departamento de Migración agents and railway officials in Matamoros reported that migrants had taken to using cars to make the final leg of the journey to the border, often with the help of local coyotes.[19] The Missouri Pacific Railroad Company, which had railroad lines in Mexico complained to the Departamento de Migración and *Gobernación* that labor agents were pushing the migrants into taking cars to get around checks, though the station head at Nuevo Laredo wrote back that it could also be because cars were better at going where migrants wanted to go.[20] This was confirmed by the inspector at Torreón who in a report to *Gobernación* outlined the different ways migrants avoided agents on the railroad. One method was simply to buy

[17] Poder Ejecutivo Federal, 4-352-1925-1F, Agente del Servicio de Emigración en Saltillo Coahuila, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF

[18] Letters, Jan 11-21st 1926, 4-352-2-1925-7A, Agente de Migration en Saltillo Coah, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF

[19] "Ferrocarriles Nacionales de Mexico Oficina del Gerente General" March 8 1926, 4-123-1926-1 Para la Direccion de Ferrocarriles nacionales de Mexico Anexo, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

[20] 4-352-2-1926-8A, The Missouri Railroad Company, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

tickets to cities north of Torreón and once there buy tickets to border towns. A variation on this method involved buying tickets migrants had no intention of using. Another method was buying tickets at Nazareno or Jimulco, where ticket agents sold to everyone, or going through stations very early in the morning or late at night to avoid agents. More worrisome to Departamento de Migración officers was a sophisticated method, which involved labor agents using cars in northern Mexico to ferry migrants between stations.[21] Further east in Matamoros, station head Fernandez Landero wrote a similar letter saying that migrants from Jalisco, Michoacán and Guanajuato would go around the Departamento de Migración station in Saltillo, by getting off trains and boarding later, take a train to San Luis Potosí and Tampico and then north to Texas, or by using cars to go to the next station. These reports often emphasized the false promises of labor agents who organized these migrations, who sold dreams of work in the US, and the abuses and schemes to which migrants fell victim.[22] This did not dissuade the railroad and its agents from selling tickets, which they continued to do, and even object to migration agents bording trains. This frustrated the agent Manuel Limon Maciel at Ciudad Juarez to the point where he accused the railroad of seeking to undermine immigration policy by pusing its own selfish interests.[23]

Starting in 1930, the Mexican government began an effort to work directly with the leaders of the Mexican National Railroad. The Chief Inspector of Migration sent a report to the President of the National Railways, J Sanchez Mejorada, requesting that he order ticket agents to

[21] Secretaria de Gobernación, Al Adalberto Tejado, 4-352-2-1926-9ª, El Agente de Migracion en Torreón Coahila, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF

[22] "Secretaria de Gobernación", Feb 22 1926, 4-352-2-1926-10A, El Delegado de Migración en Matamoros, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF

[23] Manuel Limon Maciel, August 25 1926, 4-352-2-1927- 24A Delegado de Migracion Ciudad Juarez - da cuentas con las medias que ha tomado para evitar la aglomeración de braceros emigrantes, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF

not sell tickets to Mexican *braceros* (general term for migrant workers before WWII) trying to migrate to the US. Mejorada noted that *braceros* who did not meet the requirements were a problem year after year: "They intended to cross the line through illegal means, causing innumerable difficulties and discomfort to the Immigration Service, our neighbors and themselves. *Braceros* who cannot emigrate, threaten the peace of the people at the border, as border towns are unable to provide work *braceros* linger, they are forced to endure the spectacle of misery, lack of money, and hunger: forcing the Government, in the end, to have to dispense heavy expenses to return these laborers to their places of origin."[24] Mejorada claimed that 40% of migrants going north did not fulfill the necessary requirements to emigrate, and that only taking strong measures could stop this flow of migrants because "unfortunately in our experience, persuasion has been unsuccessful in dissuading *braceros* from trying to penetrate stealthily with the help of *coyotes* who are responsible for the crimes incurred by *braceros*."[25] These methods of persuasion were a campaign of circulars that were sent to governors and government agencies in migrant sending states that warned of the dangers of migration.

Several days later, President Portes Gil sent a message to Sanchez Mejorada requesting that agents not sell tickets to migrants unless they had papers by the Departamento de Migración or US consuls showing they had met all requirements to go to the US[26] In response, the president of the railroad told President Gil that they had issued a circular that would address these issues. Circular No. 5, as it was called, outlined the dangers migrants faced in making the journey to the

[24] Memoandum of Secretary of Migration, March 17, 1930, 4-352-1930- 607 Secretaria de Ralaciones Exteriores, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Letter to President of Mexican Railroad, Mach 24 1930, 4-352-1930- 607 Secretaria de Ralaciones Exteriores, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

US and the dire circumstances that would befall them and force them to return home. It was to be distributed to every passenger agent. A second circular added that agents were to give strong warnings to potential migrants telling them of the requirements to cross the border and the dangers they faced. Still, these measures fell short of what the Departamento de Migración had requested - that the ticket agents make sure they had all the required documents and at least $90 before selling them tickets.[27] However, although Ygnacio M. Buitron, the Departamento de Migración railroad chief at Torreón, believed that without having the railroad agents conducting checks when tickets are sold, "it is physically impossible to contain the migration of workers," the railroad had other interests to balance.[28]

The Mexican National Railroad sought a balance between ending potential undocumented migration and encouraging other forms of migration. Migrants were a major source of revenue for the passenger trains of the Mexican National, and this was not just the migrants that were going to the US without documents. Northern Mexico was growing economically and continued to draw migrants from central Mexico. It was difficult if not impossible for agents to tell them apart from those going to the US, especially because many people started out as domestic migrants before continuing across the border. The flow of migrants who went to the US with all their documents, the flow of retuning migrants and the flow of internal migrants that went to mining, cotton, or the oil industries might be hurt by an attempt to cut down on those who might become undocumented in the US. The railroad sought

[27] Circular No 5 Mexican National Railroad to all Passanger Agents, Departamento de Migración Letter April 30 1930, A Circular for Station Agents: 4-352-1930- 607 Secretaria de Ralaciones Exteriores, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

[28] Letter, Mach 14 1930, 4-352-1930-638 El Delegado de Migacion en Torreón Coaulia, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

to balance these interests through warnings and softer methods than turning itself into a policing power.

The Departamento de Migración's responsibilities likewise extended to domestic migrants, most of whom were oil workers on the gulf coast, but some were also agricultural workers in the north. There, regulating labor became difficult as it became clear that regional migration was a stepping stone for international migration. In 1925, there were labor shortages in the Laguna region during the cotton picking season. Local officials would ask the Departamento de Migración agents to let migrants come to northern Mexico, especially when local agents stopped migrants on trains from Torreón going north because it was more than likely that they would continue eventually to the US. Eventually they made an accommodation for some migrants to go.[29] As a border region in the middle of the migratory cross traffic, but also an area dependent on domestic migrants for labor, the territorial government of Baja had long running tensions with the Departamento de Migración and SRE on what to do about migrants going north and those returning.[30]

In another case, the Departamento de Migración had to balance interests between Baja Californian growers and Sinaloa. In Sinaloa and Sonora, many workers went to the cotton fields in the Mexican borderlands, some were in Sonora, while other fields were in Baja. However, by 1927, the Sonoran and Sinaloan governments were concerned that the majority of workers were not returning to their home states and both states reported losses in population in small towns. In

[29] Letters Nov 28 1925 to Dec 29 1925, 4-352-2-1925-4A, El Inspector de Migration en Ciudad Juarez, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF

[30] For example, see, Telegrams, "Huerta, Adolfo de la", FAO MFN 2428, Exp 387, Archivo Plutarco Calles, México City, DF

Baja, the government reported that many workers, encouraged by the good wages, stayed after the picking contracts were over. However, when the local northern economy took a downturn, rather than return home, most of those workers crossed the border into California and Arizona to work there instead. The state governments and the Departamento de Migración decided to stop the further contracting of workers from the south to work in cotton fields in the north close to the border.[31]

Migrants and the Departamento de Migración

Like the consulates, state governments and municipal presidents, the Departamento de Migración was not a monolithic bureaucracy carrying out the dictates of the state, but an organization that sought to manage competing interests and capacities. While the Departamento de Migración sought to curb undocumented migration to the US and to enforce both Mexican and US migration law, it was also an important conduit for migration in general. The Departamento de Migración often provided information and help for people seeking to go to the US legally, where entry remained numerically unrestricted after 1924 (at least technically). Likewise, the Departamento de Migración provided a variety of services to migrants, the most important of which was paying repatriation expenses for destitute migrants who wished to return home, both before and after the Great Depression repatriation from the US began.

The most common type of correspondence to the Departamento de Migración was from men who sought either documents or instructions on how to migrate legally. Many of these requests were simple, especially those of visitors, students, and middle class migrants. In other

[31] Memoranda Administrativa, "Transporte de Braceros de Sonora y Sinaloa," July 1929, 4-352-1927-510, El Gobierno de DTO Norte BC Informa Sobre Emigración de Trabajadores N Mexicanos a los EEUU, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF

cases, however, those seeking to migrate were labor migrants who had long histories of migration, or people going to join family members, or women and children. These letters gave more information on the ways migration had developed by the late 1920s.

People frequently went to the Departamento de Migración in addition to Mexican Consuls to report on abuses by American officials at the border. This was especially true for people who lived in the borderlands who were used to going back and forth with ease. They frequently appealed to the Departamento de Migración when US INS agents acted in ways they saw as unjust.[32] At other points they worked with borderland residents and sometimes US employers to issue special permits for workers of certain companies to cross the border at will, going around US immigration laws.[33] The same was true of local governments who wanted the Departamento de Migración to crack down on smuggling, contracting, and other activities. Though in most cases they could do little other than start an investigation and publicize the issue in the press.[34]

When Departamento de Migración agents did enforce the rules, boarding trains, and demanding papers from people, they sometimes encountered unexpected resistance. This was especially the case near the border where people were used to traveling without restrictions. Migrants would lodge complaints and appeal to local governments. These local officials frequently complained that railroad inspections slowed trains down, made them late, and upset

[32] "Participio que varios mexicanos se quejan contra el maltrato del celador norteamericano en Andrade, California - J. Brussel," 4-352-2-1925-6A El Agente de Migración en Algodones, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

[33] Jan 29, 1927, 4-352-1927-77 Consulta Si Permite a Unos Mex ir a Trabaja a Terriotorio Americano Sin Llenar los Requisitos, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

[34] "Informa como braceros burlas las disposiciones de migración para salir a EE UU y sugiere la forma de evitarlo." Feburary 14 1926, 4-352-2-1926-9A, El Agente de Migración en Torreón Coah, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

passengers. In one case, José Choren and his father Cecilio Gutierrez were stopped by Departamento de Migración agents and ordered back to Morleon, Guanajuato. They wrote a letter to the Departamento de Migración stating that Mr. Gutierrez had already been to the United States, specifically Chicago, three times prior and wanted to know why they had been turned back and that they needed to avoid being stopped in the future.[35] When Castaneda asked the Departamento de Migración about what papers he would need to migrate to the US, he was given a list of what he needed to satisfy Mexican and American officials. He was one of hundreds in 1926 to solicit such information.[36]

While they discouraged undocumented crossings, the government in the form of the Departamento de Migración, and Mexican consuls at border towns, at times could actively encourage migration even when it was not official policy to do so. Throughout the 1920s consuls and Departamento de Migración agents would give Mexican passports to people who had been deported and wanted to legally re-cross into the US.[37] Consuls could and did issue passports ex-post-facto to those who had avoided Mexican immigration rules in leaving the country, which the Departamento de Migración did not object to.[38] In others cases it was common to provide documents to legalize the status of those already in the US.[39] This type of discretion was common at the Departamento de Migración, and SRE, where officials had to deal with the

[35] July 1, 1929, 4-352-1929-523 Jose Choren, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

[36] R Castaneda, 4-352-1926-2, these files exist in Series 352 from 1926 to the mid 1930s. Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

[37] Lawrence A Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897-1931: Socio-Economic Patterns* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980), 59-60.

[38] Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United State, 66; Diario Oficial* 14 (March 17, 1920): 1225; Aguirre Berlanga to Ramón P. Denegri, Consul Genderal, June 14, 1918, AHSRE, 16-24-25.

[39] 4-352-1929-382, FERNANDO FRAUSTO, Cd Victoria Tamps, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

situation in front of them. This meant helping their countymen's status at the border, even at the cost of the agencies larger emigration goals.

Like many of Mexico's government institutions, the Departamento de Migración was paternalistic and sought to not only curb undocumented migration and encourage legal migration, but also to guard the gender and moral norms of the country. For women, migrating north legally was a fraught process. Women who were not directly accompanied by their fathers or husbands needed permission from the Departamento de Migración to go to the United States. This even applied in cases where the woman was clearly her own head of family, or accompanied by other relatives. In some cases, the process went smoothly (especially those who said they were going only temporarily). In other cases, it was much more difficult. Guadalupe Simental had to explain that she was abandoned by her husband before she and her daughter would be allowed to go to the US to join her brothers who were in Los Angeles.[40] Meanwhile, Maria Mora and Serfina García both had to explain that they were going to join relatives in Los Angeles and that their parents were dead.[41] Teodora Torres Ornelas wrote a long letter expressing her dire circumstances in Mexico and wished to join relatives in Los Angeles.[42] In other cases, women applied in groups, were students, or had other reasons, but in all cases they had to explain themselves to authorities and appeal to them in ways that fit gender norms that did

[40] Guadalupa Simental, April 23 1926, 4-352-1626-4, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

[41] 4-352-1926-45 MARIA DOLORES MORA, 4-352-1930-603 Serfina Garcia, 4-352-1928-313 CONSULTA SI UN GRUPO DE MUJERES PUEDEN SALIR SOLAS A EEUU, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

[42] 4-352-1927-132 Teodora Torres Ornelas, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

not see women migrants as anything other than a spouse or daughter, even when it was clear that they were going north to work.

While children in Mexico has been expected to work from a young age, especially in rural areas, by the 1920s there was a strong emerging discourse on childhood. For the post-revolutionary state, this meant that there was a lot more attention paid to the young, with the establishment of primary schools throughout the nation, especially in rural areas. For Departamento de Migración this meant that officials were much more conscious about keeping minors from participating in labor migration. While the Departamento de Migración did not have an equivalent to the Board of Special Inquiry, it did have to grant permission for minors to cross without their direct guardians. A significant proportion of these were students, of both genders, often going to specific schools for Mexicans in the southwest, illustrating their growing importance in migration by the late 1920s. Others, however, were like Rosario Hernandez, going to join family members in the US. These cases and the ones mentioned above point to the fact that by the 1920s, very few people were migrating without any prior contact.[43] These were second wave migrants going to join people who had gone before, likewise for many, these were not their first voyages to the US. Jesus Cevallos, for example, had been to the US in 1925 and came back, in 1927. He was taking his siblings north with him when he asked for permission for the younger ones.[44] One particular area of concern was whether children would perform labor, while there was not the system in place that the Immigration bureau had on the other side, officials did turn back some families, relying in administrative discretion to keep some people from migrating.

[43] 4-352-1926-50 ROSARIO HERNANDEZ, many more in Series 352 Individual cases. Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

[44] 4-352-1927-88 Jesús Cevallos, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

A smaller section of the Departamento de Migración's work involved coordination with Mexican consuls in the US. The families of migrants who had gone north would often send letters to the Departamento de Migración requesting information on family members who they had lost contact with. The Departamento de Migración would then forward this to consuls in respective areas where the migrant had gone. Felipe Cruz, for example, had his letter sent to the consul in Chicago, where the consul searched for his brother Francisco Cruz after he failed to contact them for several years. It is unknown if the consul was successful in this case.[45] The Departamento de Migración and SRE agents exersiced a lot of discretion in these cases, whether or not people would investigate heavily relied on the particular consul the family sent information to.

Like other Mexican institutions, and the Consuls in chapter three, the Departamento de Migración participated in a variety of contradictory policies that both hindered and promoted migration. It primarily sought to limit undocumented migration after 1924, enforcing US rather than Mexican immigration law. However, it was very limited in what it could accomplish with few resources and few people having an interest in cooperation. In looking at how it dealt with individual migrants, it is also clear that in an era when the line between legal and illegal migration was often blurred, the agency could be used by people to aid migration. This was most glaring in the cases when the Departamento de Migración simply gave documents to migrants that had been deported because of a lack of all the appropriate documents, a practice their American counterparts, the INS, also did occasionally in this era, and a lot in the Bracero era (1941-1965). The most important act the Departamento de Migración did for migrants however

[45] 4-352-1930-699 Francisco Cruz, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

was help destitute migrants at the border return home, something that will be expanded upon in the next chapter, which looks at Mexico during the Great Depression.

Rather than taking the Mexican state at its word, but at its practice, shows the massive disconnect between official restrictive policies, and a reality where the state was rarely able to stop migration. Instead it's efforts were ment to solve a political imperative to action, responding to the post-revolutionary rhetoric on migration. Responding to its own imperatives the railroads, nominally part of the state, could and did undermine these efforts, much like the state and local governments the next section deals with. Ultimatly, migration was a social process. While this chapter has so far focused on the Mexican Federal Government agencies that dealt with migration, their actions were more a reaction, a reflection of the dynamics that guided and drove migration in Mexican society, it is to these dynamics that I now turn.

The Cristero War and Local Government

The Cristero War, an armed conflict between the Mexican government and Catholic rebels, raged from 1926 to 1929. The Cristero war was both over religion, with the anti-clerical Calles seeking to enforce the anti-Catholic provisions of the 1917 revolutionary constitution, and about protection of traditional rights and lands. When the revolutionary government sought to limit the power of the church, the Church declared a boycott on religious services, and church-supporters armed for war. The war became a guerilla war of attrition on both sides with the government using revolutionary veterans from across the country against local militias. The rebellion's heartland was the Bajío region and the Altos of Jalisco. While large scale violence occurred during the Revolution, the region was not a hotbed of agrarian-land revolts. Although large haciendas did exist, they were outnumbered by the large number of independent rancherias

in the region, which gave social relations a more stable character. The war became an additional reason to migrate in Guanajuato, Jalisco and Michoacán, places that were already sending the most migrants north in the 1920s. The war and localized violence in particular, made migration the obvious solution for both people and local governments alike.

David Fitzgerald has argued that throughout its history, the Mexican state has been constrained in migration policy by outside forces like the United States, as well as forces within, such as bureaucratic balkanization, economic policies, and systemic corruption. Making use of Paul Taylor's study of Arandas Jalisco, he showed how in the late 1920s, contradictory motivations influenced the ways migrants, local governments, and the national government interacted. While the federal government urged local governments to restrict migration, "The municipal government of Arandas issues hundreds of *salvaconductos* (safe conduct passes allowing the bearer to pass government checkpoints) for men, and less frequently their families, seeking work in the United States or other parts of Mexico." [46] During the *Cristero* Rebellion, "municipal presidents ignored repeated federal instructions to 'make intense propaganda' to dissuade emigration," with many elite members of the community writing letters of recommendation and giving loans to finance migrations.[47] Taylor himself argued that in Arandas migration became a valve that checked *agrarismo* and reform movements in the 1920s.[48] Migrating away, with the possibility of providing desperately needed remittances, was often preferable for local officials than resistance and violence.

[46] David Fitzgerald, "Inside the Sending State: The Politics of Mexican Emigration Control," *International Migration Review* Vol 40 No 2 (Summer 2006):259–293

[47] Ibid.

[48] Paul Schuster Taylor, *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community: Arandas in Jalisco, Mexico*, (University of California press, 1933), 32.

In Arandas, the already high level of migration shot up even further as violence increased. Many sought escape from either government forces or pressure to join the rebellion.[49] As one migrant explained about why he went to the US in 1927, "They wanted all the men to fight (for the Cristeros), but I told them, 'you catholic and I am catholic, but I don't want to go and fight like a fool.' My father wouldn't give me the money to go to the States, so I sold two steers from his herd to get the money. Finally, when he saw I was determined to go, he gave me $500 (US) and 200 pesos to get to El Paso."[50] Rafael Orendain told Taylor that the local economy had declined since the revolution, forcing many peones to emigrate, including himself. He eventually came back to Jalisco and joined this *Cristero* rebellion but his side lost.[51] Another returning migrant in Arandas said that "[p]eople are too poor here; all the time they want to fight, and they take all you have in taxes."[52] Money for the journey was often put together by families, but also lent by elites in the town seeking to avoid tensions. As one ranchero put it, "The hacendados prefer to let the workers get away so they won't concentrate in pueblos and ask for land. They would [be willing to] loan money to emigrants. The laborers go from the *haciendas* here the same as from elsewhere."[53]

The continual migration back and forth created its own momentum in Arandas. One man who had traveled to the US in 1913 returned to live in the town, but then went back to the US

[49] Taylor, *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community*, 36-40.

[50] "Mexican Interviewed," Folder 12:1, Carton 12, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[51] "Rafael Orendain interview", October18, 1931, Folder 22, Carton 1, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[52] Taylor, *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community*, 40.

[53] Taylor, A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community, 44.

before returning in 1929 with two trucks, a fact that did not go unnoticed by his neighbors.[54] Not everyone fled the violence; another person explained that migration was caused by opportunity: "The worst work in the United States is better than the best here. The repatriados say that treatment is good and wages are good, and there is much machinery."[55] A small rancher supported his family from the US, going back and forth various times from 1910 to 1928, while a ranch laborer went in 1922, returned the same year, went again in 1924 and returned the same year, and went in 1926 and returned again in 1927. Even middle class residents like W. Rebeling, a local doctor, took out loans when he went to the US.[56] The ways in which migrants, the federal government, and local governments interacted makes clear that the patterns Taylor saw in Arandas extend far beyond the state of Jalisco.

The Cristero War had a long lasting impact on migrant families from these areas. Miguel Venegas and his family fled when the government froze the assets of their general store in Zapotlanejo Jalisco. A member of the Union Popular (UP) he was an active participant in protests against the government and though never part of the armed struggle, his brother Alfonso's involvement as a printer for the Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa made him a target. He fled to Jalapa and to Aguascalientes and decided to go to the US having his family take the train to Ciudad Juarez. He and his family go to Los Angeles, where he remained active in Cristero affairs through correspondence. His brother was killed by government forces during the conflict, and because of the local cacique, Rosario Orozco,

[54] Taylor, A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community, 42.

[55] Taylor, *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community*, 40.

[56] "Dr W Rebeling interview", October 20, 1931, Folder 22, Carton 1, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

Venegas was unable to return till the 1930s. His active correspondence back home however kept family on both sides of the border together.[57]

These accounts were quit common. After Ezequiel Huerta Gutiérrez and Salvador Huerta Gutiérrez were executed by federal troops for their role in the resistance, the two brother's oldest children had to support their families. One, Salvador Huerta went to Chicago while another group went to Los Angeles.[58] Others left to the US fleeing the Cristeros, like Helidoro Barragan, who described "They wanted money; it was very dangerous. They had already killed José Luis Cháves and raped two young women down by the bridge. When I heard they were looking for me I went into hiding."[59]

The new waves of migrants fleeing from these areas did not go unnoticed in reports or by scholars. Newspapers noted the migration as has historian Julia Young, in writing about the Cristero violence, found a woman who "reported that 'everyone who can is preparing to leave for the United States' since 'there are families who do not have the necessities of life and who pass entire days without eating.'" [60] And a US Consular official who noted "the people have been streaming out of this district and their plight is said to be most pitiful."[61] Young has argued that migrants were actively involved in every aspect of the Cristero War. As Cristero supporters left their homes due to violence, forced relocation, and even bombings, they formed a transnational

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[57] María Teresa Venegas, *Letters Home: Mexican Exile Correspondence from Los Angeles, 1927-1932* ([The Author], 2012), 7-15.

2. Ibid.

[58] Ibid. 160

[59] Luis Gonzalez y Gonzalez, *San José de Gracia: Mexican Village in transtition*, Texas Pan American Series, trans. John Upton (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1982), 158.

[60] Julia G. Young, *Mexican Exodus: Emigrants, Exiles, and Refugees of the Cristero War*, 1 edition (England ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[61] Ibid.

diaspora that "connected with each other across great distances in order to advance a common set of political and religious goals" from both Mexico and the US.[62] This support from the Mexican migrant diaspora in the US helped sustain the struggle in the central highlands, but didn't change the course of the war. In areas with long migration histories, it is not suprizing that people turned to migration networks as a solution to the violence during the Cristero war.

Circular Migration Circuits in Guanajuato and Aguascalientes

The Federal government and the Departamento de Migración in particular waged a long campaign to enlist the aid of local governments in curbing migration. In doing so they also recorded many of the migration trends in these places. For example, the federal government sought the help of local governments in a propaganda campaign. The Department of Protection in the SRE and the Mexican Consul at El Paso sent circulars to governors in migrant-sending states listing the requirements for legal entry and asking them to distribute the information.[63] A little over a month later, the Departamento de Migración sent booklets to all governors. These booklets contained information meant to dissuade migrants from heading north and encouraged governors to make copies and use them in conferences to educate local officials on the issue.[64] In further memos, the Departamento de Migración told governors to remind municipal presidents of US and Mexican policies. It was especially important to "warn municipal presidents to refrain from telling workers that the certificates they issue to them will be enough for them to migrate

[62] Ibid, 8.

[63] Circular, May 15 1929, 4-352-1929-507 Inmigracion de Mexicanos a los EUA, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

[64] El Problema de la Emigración de Obreros y Campesinos Mexicanos" July 26, 1929, to Governors of Zacatecas, Michuacan, Nayarit, Hidalgo, Colima, Gurango, San Luis Potosí, Aguascalientes, 4-352-1929-530-540, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

without difficulties."[65] Local mayors were not just refraining from stopping migration, they were actively encouraging it through the municipal passes that they gave. We can see this more clearly by focusing on two states, Aguascalientes and Guanajuato.

Making use of the documents local governments sent the Departamento de Migración in its campaign to regulate migration, I show the ways interpersonal networks drove circular migration. The campaign to dissuade migration carried over to the collection of migration data by the Department of Statistics. This information was often fragmentary and irregularly made but it goes further than any other source in showing how migrant networks functioned on the ground. The information that state governments gathered about local municipalities granting passes to migrants going north shows that starting in the 1920s, local governments in central Mexico often defied the federal government and encouraged migration north. Focusing on localities in Guanajuato and Aguascalientes shows how people made use of passes, information, and town-based networks to migrate north.

Information on how to migrate was not hard to come by. As mentioned in the first chapter, returning migrants told their relatives, as well as friends, acquaintances, or even people they had just met about their trips north. This worried some observers, who noted that, "the Mexican who returns to old Mexico is called a 'northerner' by his neighbors; he is a hero in his village; he has been everywhere, he has seen everything, he knows everything- what he says is listened to with great respect and carries great influence with his hearers."[66] This type of

[65] Departamento de Migración Tecnica, March 8 1930, 4-352-1930-607 Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

[66] Report: Mexican welfare Committee of the Colorado State Council of the Knights of Columbus, Folder 11.21, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

information often had much more influence than official government warnings or tragic stories in newspapers.

Network theory allows migration scholars to explain the ways information traveled and its relative importance in making decisions, migrating, and circulating back home. Information traveled both through strong ties such as family members and close friends, but also through weak ties such as acquaintances, or people one just happened to meet. While job information was considered more credible if it came from a strong tie, more information was ultimately spread and most people ultimately participated influenced by information spread through weak ties such as loose acquaintances. Spreading information through close ties limited the amount of information that could be spread while weak ties create bridges to new social clusters of people. Yet, at the same time, early migrants did not spread information as much as the second wave, who were often better connected, so that individuals with many acquaintances were best placed to act as local bridges between social clusters. However, people were also very well aware of the literature warning against migration, that ranged from government propaganda to stories in newspapers across the country. The risks for migrants were real, and included bad treatment, deportation, injuries, or even death. Tragic stories circulated broadly and were well known in migrant communities. However it appears that the stories the government circulated in its propaganda were discounted for ones that people heard about in their local communities. It is clear that people took what was said to them by returning migrants far more seriously than what all others told them. People rarely acted on mass-media information unless it came through personal ties, as the widely shared stories and corridos later in this chapter show. And on the whole, people came to the conclusion that migration was worth the risk.[67]

[67] Mark S. Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology*, 78 (1973): 1360-1380

One study looked at the effect of strong ties on migration, defined as family and close friends, and weak ties, defined as someone from their village or area. The authors found that weak ties were a better indicator for migration from a village, because strong tie networks were limited in their information while weak ties (everyone you might know or have met) produced more information and opportunities for new people to migrate. However, someone you had strong ties migrating had a larger impact on a particular person deciding to migrate themselves, especially above a certain threshold. They argued that this is because the two types of ties are complimentary not opposed to each other. "Strong ties (measured here by the closest family contact) usually provide information about jobs at the destination and help (financial and other) to facilitate migration. Weak ties (as measured by the village in which the potential migrant resides) usually provide some information about jobs at the destination."[68] This fairly closely aligns with the accounts of migration in early twentieth century Mexico. Mexico is not a direct analogy to these examples however, because labor agents, contract worker exemptions, politics and violence make it impossible to create a self-contained theoretical model of Mexican migration.

As Jorge Duránd, Rafael Alacron, and Douglass Massey have shown on their work from the Mexican Migration Project on post 1965-migration, international migration is a social process that has deeply impacted the development of communities across central Mexico. As migration networks spread and involved more families, they became a way to gain much needed capital, allowing people to build houses, buy land, or make enough money to counteract the uncertainties and drops in agricultural production. This was especially true of younger children

[68] Corrado Giulietti, Jackline Wahba, Yves Zenou, "Strong versus Weak Ties in Migration," IZA DP No. 8089 (2014):4

who may not have access to enough land to begin or support a family.[69] As such, migration functioned as a way to relief demographic and economic pressures for individual families as it did politically for local governments. I argue that these patterns were already being established across central Mexico by the 1920s, as seen in Guanajuato and Aguascalientes.

As part of their effort to control migration, the Secretary of the Interior's Department of Statistics began a sub department of migration statistics. These statistics were meant to be forwarded by municipal presidents to Governors and then to the Departamento de Migración and Department of Statistics. The collection of statistics and the campaign to dissuade Mexicans from migrating were not separate operations. In Guanajuato, it was the Department of Statistics that sent the state government brochures and booklets to distribute to local officials spelling out the problems workers and peasants faced if they migrated. Guanajuato's secretary of the interior responded by saying he would make sure the state was "supporting conferences in order to combat the migration of Mexican workers and peasants."[70]

In looking at lists of *salvaconductos,* safe conduct passes forwarded to Governors from municipal presidents, we have some of the best information available about who was migrating. While the statistics forwarded to governors were supposed to include all people who received certificates from municipal presidents, and important information like name, age, civil status, members of family, if they have job in Mexico, if they have a job offer, occupation, and place they were coming from, all of this information was only recorded intermittently. Some places did

[69] Douglas S. Massey et al., *Return to Aztlan: The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); 1. Douglas S Massey, Jorge Durand, and Nolan J Malone, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003).

[70] Letters, July 29 1929, Departamento de Migracion de Estadisticas, 4-352-1929-472 Gobernado de Guanajuato, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

not take down information beyond names, and in other cases even less, simply noting how many people got papers. Reports were also fairly irregular, depending on which offices and governors reported. However, enough reports contained all of the information to give us some sense of the patterns of migration from Guanajuato. Taking two different two-month groups of reports from Guanajuato, from July-August 1929 to and December- January 1930, before the Depression had started to effect migration in large numbers, shows how migration was structured.[71]

In that time period, 218 men (heads of family) asked for documents from local officials to go north. About 80% of those were men going without their families, although some were families with as many as five members. It was in these family groups that some women were also counted in those going north. Yet at the same time, nearly half of the men in these reports were married. This suggests that many men saw going north as a way to support their wives and families in Mexico.

The men going north were asked whether they had a job in Mexico and whether they had job offers in the United States. A direct job offer in the US, which was against US immigration law, was something some men were willing to admit to Mexican officials. It also likely indicated that this was not the first time they were migrating to the US, as a job offer was unlikely without direct connections to an employer.[72] Table 5.1 shows that while unemployment certainly influenced the decision to participate in migratory labor, more than two thirds had a job in Mexico when they decided to leave. For them, opportunity to earn higher wages played a larger role than economic desperation. The overwhelming majority, however, did not have a direct job offer. Only twelve people had such offers, however, those twelve people were traveling with

[71] The months in between are missing.

[72] An issue I address later in this chapter.

others. All twelve were going to specific destinations in the US. This means that they were repete migrants, circulating back to Mexico. Such circular migrants played an influential role in getting other people to join them on their journey to the US.

While people often said they had no specific job offer, they did have very clear ideas of where they were going, often mentioning specific cities deep in the interior of the US, as far as Ohio and Michigan. Table 5.2 shows that most people were going to Texas, though often this too was a specific location, like Chapel Hill, Buda, or Artesia Well, not exactly general destination centers for migration. Of those who said Texas was their destination, only five people named the state in general and not a specific city. This suggests that even when people did not have a specific job offer, they had enough information and confidence to set out to a specific location inside the United States, and to leave a job in Mexico to do so.

Table 5.1. Employment Status of Migrants from Guanajuato June-August, December-February 1929-1930

	Job in Mexico?	Offer of Job in US?
yes	117	12
no	51	163
No Answer	50	43

Source: Departamento de Estadísticas de Migración, Departamento de Migración

Table 5.2. Destination of Migrants from Guanajuato June-August, December-February 1929-1930

Texas	56%	West	3%
California	8%	No Fixed Destination	19%
Midwest	14%		

Source: Departamento de Estadísticas de Migración, Departamento de Migración

The vast majority of migrants in Guanajuato came from a fairly short list of counties (municipalities), which included Celaya, San Francisco de Rincón, Ciudad Manuel Doblado, Yurira, Uriangato, Salvatierra, Apaseo, Cuerámaro, Dolores Hidalgo, Irapuato, and Tierra

Blanca. Only two are large cities; the rest are rural cabezeras with large farming populations and importantly, a railroad depot. In order to understand how these patterns work on the ground, we can examine two places that I focused on in chapter 1: San Francisco de Rincón and the city of Celaya. Detailed records are unfortunately only available for December to February 1929-1930, a time when migration was slower than in the summer, but it still yields valuable information.

By the late 1920s, San Francisco de Rincón had been sending migrants to the US for more than two decades and to other parts of Mexico for longer than that. In two months, several groups of men sought papers north. The average age was 30 years old, with the oldest 57 and the youngest 14. Exactly half were married. Every single one indicated they had a job in Mexico, though only two said they had a job offer in the US. About two-fifths indicated they were agricultural laborers, another quarter indicated they were urban laborers, and the rest wrote down that they were skilled tradesmen. People from the San Francisco de Rincón area were well connected to Texas, with more than 80% of the men indicating that was their destination, a much higher percentage than Celaya or other towns in Guanajuato.[73]

Looking at the specific people and families that were leaving these towns in Table 5.3, illustrates the extent to which migrants relied on town-based interpersonal networks. These included family members, but also friends, and acquaintances and relied on the migrant experience of those they knew in order to make the journey, acquire jobs, and set their destination.

[73] There was no advantage for indicating one location or another, though there is probably a bias towards returning migrants rather tan first time migrants. 4-352-1930-612 El Gobierne del Estado de Guanajuato, Departamento de Estadísticas de Migración, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

Table 5.3. Characteristics of Migrant groups from San Francisco de Rincon and Celya Guanajuato as percentage of participants. (How often did a person in a group of migrants share this characteristic with another person in the same group)

Nuclear Family	34%	Similar Occuption	58%
Relatives	60%	Same Destination	90%
Similar Age	90%		

Source: Departamento de Estadísticas de Migración, Departamento de Migración

On December 8th 1929, three men left San Francisco de Rincón. Filomento Martinez headed north alongside Martin Martinez, who was his relative (though exact relation is unclear). They were both hat makers and headed for El Paso. With them was Filogonio Gallardo, a laborer who was the same age as Filomeno, 40. These two probably knew each other for some time, and considering their age, might have previously migrated together, considering that they had both migrated before. A week later, J. Jesus Alba, who was 39, also a similar age, but a merchant, left for Texas. He was followed a few days later by Anciento Munoz, also an older merchant going north. A week after this group of people departed San Francisco de Rincon, three more men left, Francisco Villaneva, Aurora Pais, and Salvador Rodriguez, ages 23, 19, and 14 respectively. They left as a group to Arizona, though their exact relation to each other is not indicated.

A month later a much larger group of people left from Rincón, consisting of ten people, including a family and two women, along with several young men between the ages of 16 and 22. With just one exception, all headed to Texas. Of this group, several of the young men shared a last name. The two women were related to each other, but the others did not share a last name other than the family of four. This leads me to think that while some people were related to each other, they were also likely friends or more distant relatives. A week later, another group of men left. These ranged from age 18 to 42, with no women in the group. Of these, two shared the last name Soto, three shared the last name Chavez, and six were in their mid-twenties.

The patterns, of traveling with those you know to destinations others have been to were fairly similar when looking at patterns from Celaya, a city in the middle of the Bajío at the intersection of several railroads and was at the heart of circular migration in Mexico. Here, two months' worth of information also showed the effect of interpersonal networks in driving migration. Large groups continued to leave through August, almost all comprising of men. One of these groups consisted of young men who were unemployed. They however were in a minority. While unemployment was a concern, two thirds of men from Celaya reported having a job in Mexico and none reported having a job offer in the US. Their average age of 28 was just about the same as the men in Rincón, and just over half were single. While a majority were traveling without families, at least ten families travelled north in these two months, a much larger number than came from Rincón. They also came from a much greater range of occupations: about half were agricultural workers, with a large group working as laborers outside the fields, and at least six skilled tradesmen including a shoe maker, a carpenter, and a mechanic. They also headed to more diverse locations: one third were on their way to the Midwest, including six to Chicago, and the majority that headed to Texas were going to places further inland, with thirteen people going to San Antonio, five to San Benito, and three to Houston.

In the first weeks of January 1930, three men requested passes to the US and left Celaya. They were Valentin Varges, his son, Felipe Varges, and Pedro Estrella, probably a friend of theirs. The older man was nearly 60 while the other two were 16 and 25 respectively. The father worked in the field while the two young men worked in towns learning trades. Only Pedro lacked a job when they left. The Varges's said they were going to St. Louis, probably not the first time Varges had gone, and Estrella said his destination was Fort Worth.

Two weeks later, they were followed by a group of young men, who were all headed to Texas. The oldest was 32 and the youngest 21, only one was married, and all were farm workers in Celaya. Of these, three shared the last name Torres, two more shared the middle section of their names, indicating they were probably related. Two more were unrelated, but as they were going to the same destination as the others, they were probably well-known to them.

A week after the group of young men left, they were followed by a very large group that consisted of several families. All but two had occupations in Mexico and none had a specific offer of work. One family group consisted of three pairs of married men and women, and all the men were surnamed Ramirez and either brothers or cousins. The three men were laborers and headed to Chicago together. Two other families were on their way to San Benito, Texas, both fairly young, and though they had different last names, seem to be connected. Several older men were heading to Houston, and two older families to Detroit. It is highly likely that these men had been to the US before. Finally, five different men, three with families, went to San Antonio. Three of them shared the last name Rios and were going with other family members.

Migrating hundreds or thousands of miles for the chance to have a higher paying job is not a task a person undertakes without planning and thought. It is for this reason that so many of the migrants in San Francisco de Rincón and Celaya traveled with people that they knew, with family members or friends. In these places, migration went from being something some young men did in the early 20th century to a practice a much wider share of the population participated in. Half of the men who got passes from municipal presidents were already married when they left, and significant numbers were going to places that in all likelihood they had gone before, especially the people from Celaya.

In the state of Aguascalientes, the number of people granted legal immigration papers dramatically declined in the latter half of 1929.[74] In Guanajuato, passes were being issued to general migrants, while in Aguascalientes they tended to be long time migrants, who were often legally crossing back and forth. This is difficult to confirm as most reports on the issuance of passes and people leaving to the north contained much less information. Those of Aguascalientes, for example, did not ask as many questions. However, they did ask questions about wages and employment that exceeded those of Guanajuato, and it is for this reason that they deserve a closer look. These migrants used their networks to acquire jobs at specific firms in the US. The people who got passes in Aguascalientes were older and almost all of them were repeat migrants, some seemed intent on migrating permanently to the US, and the majority of them were likely also doing so legally.

Looking at six months, one of the few stretches where data is available, from December to May 1929-1930, the same time period as Guanajuato, shows some of the differences in migration. In that time period, 70 Mexicans were reported to the governor as having been issued passes, eleven of whom had families bringing the total number of people to 85. Like in Guanajuato, the sex ratio was predominantly male, 71 to 14, and those going by themselves 59 to 11, though there is also a lot of evidence to suggest that people were migrating within social circles and had long experience in doing so.

Thirty-eight reported that they were going to a specific job in the US, and of those twenty-six reported exact wages that they were going to earn in the US, some down to the penny. About half of these wages were around two dollars a day, but some reported wages as high as

[74] "Doublé Numero del Que Emigra a los EEUU Está Regresando," 4-352-1929-471 Al Gobernador del Estado de Aguascalientes, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

five dollars a day. On average they reported earning $3.14 per day in the US. This is probably accounted for by the small numbers of agricultural migrants who asked for passes in Aguascalientes. Most of these migrants were skilled railroad, mining or factory workers, as can be seen in Table 5.3. About one-fourth of the people who requested passes to go north indicated that they had families in the US. These two facts suggest that most of the men had prior experience with labor migration, having worked themselves into more skilled professions and having many links in the US. This was particularly the case with people going to Arizona mines and foundries. Three different groups specifically mentioned the United Verde Copper Company at Jerome Arizona as their destination, where they had jobs, and two of those mentioned that they already had siblings working there.[75] This suggest that in certain areas, even with a good job in the US, some people migrated back and forth.

Table 5.4. Employment in US of Migrants from Aguascalientes December-May1929-1930[76]

Railroad	18	Other Manufacturer	10
Agriculture	5	To Family	18
Mining	4	Student	6
Foundry	3	Tourist	5

Source: Departamento de Estadísticas de Migración, Departamento de Migración

Table 5.5. Destination of Migrants from Aguascalientes December-May1929-1930

Texas	35%	West	12%
California	33%	Midwest	6%
Arizona	14%		

Source: Departamento de Estadísticas de Migración, Departamento de Migración

[75] 4-532-1930-615 Gobernador De Aguascalientes Informa Sobre Emigración, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

[76] The categories for family and students are not exclusive to having a job in the US, they frequently overlapped, but for others rejoining family or going to school was the primary reason they sought a pass.

Looking at individual migrants shows how these patterns played out on the local level. The migrants from Aguascalientes went to a more diverse set of places than Guanajuato with nearly as many going to California as Texas, some going to Arizona, and others to far western states like Utah, Wyoming, and Montana. Like the migrants from neighboring towns to the south, they were headed to fairly specific locations in the US which also suggests familiarity with their destination. While they did not record their ages, many of the men seem to be familiar with each other. One group, for example, included two people named Nuñez, another with several people named Gonzalez and when they traveled it was not uncommon for everyone in a group to have the same destination. In one case, a group of seven men indicated they were going to San Antonio to work on the railroad, and all reported wages from $2.40 a day to $4 a day. Even though none shared a last name, it is likely that they knew each other. In another case, even though no large groups came at once, a lot of men wrote down Los Angeles and either the Santa Fe Railroad or the Union Pacific as their destination and job and usually reported a wage between $2 and 4$. It is likely that networks of information and support allowed many people from the state to work in those specific firms in Los Angeles, perhaps diminishing the need to travel in groups.

The two sets of data are not exactly comparable. In Aguascalientes, *salvaconducto* passes were given to those with the intention to migrate legally, which made them less likely to circulate back, while in Guanajuato it sometimes seemed like any young man who wanted to go north got one. Also included in the Aguascalientes numbers were some parents and children going to attend school in the US, some tourists, but also a hand full of women who were going to join their husbands or relatives in the US. As a result, the migrants leaving from Aguascalientes are more experienced, have more families, and more often than not, had a job in the US. Yet it

also shows that even skilled migrants with families in Mexico were returning before the Great Depression. And when they did return, they spread information about their work so that others joined them in doing exactly the same line of work.

Migration was not a one-time occurrence, but rather something that happened quite regularly among the men from Guanajuato and Aguascalientes. While men might travel and migrate alone with a labor agent in an earlier era, by now almost everyone, man or woman, was traveled with someone else, whether a family member or an acquaintance. Many were using migration to support their families in Mexico and to secure a foothold where they already were rather than set out to build something new. For these people, migration was both circular and social, an extension of community ties rather than a negation of them. Young adults now had ties that allowed them to migrate with others to places they might not know, but they could be sure someone they knew did. The social space where people lived, the ties that linked them together had expanded to encompass places and towns thousands of miles away. These processes had cumulative effects across central Mexico and the north, so that the spaces that Mexicans crisscrossed expanded in size and depth as more connections were made. These links drew together far flung places and expanded the scope of the area were Mexicans lived and operated.

The Economic Logic of Circular Migration

Family and acquaintance connections were critical in spreading information about migration; many of these were relatively weak links, a person tells another person a story while riding together on a train, which spurs a new migration, or someone seeing a migrant returning with money and deciding to strike up a conversation. Or in some cases, this might happen at a

saloon. Daniel Aguilar was a small business owner in Chihuahua when the revolution broke out and joined the forces. He got exposure to the US when he went on several trips north to buy arms for General Villa. After the war, his saloon businesses failed and in 1923 he was thinking of going to Los Angeles when he struck up a conversation with the man who had supplied the beer, who turned out to have been a returning migrant miner. The man told him to go to Miami, Arizona, where he got him work in a mine.[77]

The continuance and growth of migration in the 1920s is a testament to the government's inability to solve structural problems in Mexico's economy after the revolution. In response, in these towns and states, a migrant economy had formed. While not in the shape of that which existed in northern Mexico and helped people cross, it was just as influential in shaping lives. The migrant economy was made up of the micro-economic logics that pushed people into circular migration and made it self-sustaining, creating durable pathways that survive till today. This migrant economy was always subject for structural forces and changed over time, from the more violent and chaotic 1910s, into a stable system in the 1920s.

Remittances and goods came back, items that families and towns desperately needed. Looking at the goods migrants brought back gives a sense of the scale of the back and forth movement. A third of returning families brought back automobiles. Most of them brought clothing, photographs, animals, along with household goods like furniture and kitchen utensils. A significant minority also brought goods that could be used in economic pursuits, like tools for their trade, automobiles, machines, or agriculture equipment. These don't represent total migrants, only those that were bringing goods back to Mexico. Many returned with only money

[77] Interview, Vida de Daniel Aguilar, No 19, Folder 2, BANC FILM 2322 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

saved. Many others returned with nothing, having only injuries and hardship. In general, for those that did return with items these tools eased migrants' work or helped them create new small income streams rather than completely changed their status in life. Gamio found that most of the machines migrants brought back to the colony of Acambaro Jalisco, for example, had ceased functioning within a year.[78] Without the infrastructure to keep machines operating, they were ill suited for rural Mexico.

Table 5.6. Selected Objects Bought into Mexico by Returning Migrants in 1927

Object	Total Number	Ratio of object to 100 returning migrants	Object	Total Number	Ratio of object to 100 returning migrants
Clothing*	3720	100	Automobiles	793	37.54
Photographs	2706	118.53	Trunks	807	38.19
Chickens	2447	116	Tables	596	28.21
Chairs	2156	112	Stoves	581	27.58
Beds	1745	82.88	Sewing Machines	349	16.57
Kitchen Utensils	1642	78	Tool Sets	289	13.72

Source: Permit No 202, Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, Dec 14 1926, in Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States; A Study of Human Migration and Adjustment*. *(Trunks, suitcases, bundles)

By the late 1920s, goods and money were coming back to Mexico at a significant rate, but could and did vary as a response to violence and migration trends. A drop in return migration caused by the Crisero war was accompanied by a rise in remittances. Manuel Gamio gathered information on remittances for two two-month periods in 1926 and 1927. He used this information to show the seasonal nature of Mexican migration, illustrating the yearly flow of circular migration as migrants went back in the winter months. However, the information also shows the rate at which remittances were being sent back to Mexico in the peak months in late

[78] Manuel Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States; A Study of Human Migration and Adjustment*., New edition (New York: Dover Pubns, 1971), 238.

summer versus the slower months of winter and show that even in winter time, the numbers were significant. A total of 23,446 money orders were sent through the US Post Office from July to August 1926, and 17,709 were sent from January to February 1927. While California had fewer Mexican migrants than Texas, it sent a much greater proportion of the remittances to Mexico (8,582-6,313). The Midwest also sent a disproportionate amount from Illinois (2,923-2,107) and Indiana (1,242-837). While Texas sent fewer remittances, it was more stable, with less seasonal movement (3,318-3,109). In total, the amount of money remitted increased from 5 million pesos in 1919 to 16 million pesos just four years later, and held between 10 million pesos a year to 16 million throughout the 1920s.[79] Gamio argued that that the fluctuations in the amount sent back are tied to the Cristero War, rebellions causing more people to stay in the US and send money home (1923, 1927) rather than return themselves like in other years.[80] This translated from five million dollars a year in low years and up to eight million dollars in peak years, with the average remittance being $48.

The bulk of remittance went to central Mexico. As Table 5 illustrates, most of the funds went to the three states that sent the most migrants, Michoacán, Guanajuato, and Jalisco, followed by the smaller states where a migrant economy took root, and Mexico City. These same records show that in terms of remittances sent back to Mexico, most of those from Texas went to the border region; California had a balance of remittances from people from northern and central states, while the majority of remittances from the Midwest went to central Mexican states.

[79] Ibid, 4-5.

[80] Ibid, 163-165.

Table 5.7. Largest Destination of Remittances July-August 1926

Michoacán	4,775	Distrito Federal	1,196
Guanajuato	4,659	Zacatecas	1,140
Jalisco	3,507	Chihuahua	1,046
Nuevo Leon	1,913	Coahuila	903
Durango	1,400	San Luis Potosí	869

Source: Table 8, Money Orders Received, in Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States; A Study of Human Migration and Adjustment*

Remittances came from across the US, through the US Post Office, but also through private banks that catered to migrants. Migrants in California and the Midwest were more likely to send remittances than those in Texas.[81] In 1926, at one bank in the Imperial Valley, 134 people remitted an average of $40 each over the course of a year. Another bank reported a similar amount.[82] In Orange County, California, a bank reported that Mexicans sent back between 33 and 60 remittances per month.[83] Meanwhile, in Gary, Indiana, George Edson found that most migrants were sending money back, with 250-300 people sending back between $20 and $25, and 200 or so more sending back around $10, and a handful sending between $75 and $100 a month. Max Gallinatti of the First National Bank of Gary reported 60 Mexicans remitting money from his bank in sums ranging from $10 to $30 and occasionally over $40 a month. The post office at Gary reported that it sent "from 10-30 money orders a day for Mexicans, in sums ranging from $10 to $50 and occasionally as high as $100. The business represents a

[81] Paul S. Taylor, *An American-Mexican Frontier, Nueces County, Texas*., First Edition edition (University of North Carolina Press, 1934), pg 104-105

[82] "Analysis of Mexicans Savings Accounts, Imperial Valley" Field Notes, Folder 10:20 Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[83] "Draft Article", Folder 10:36 Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

considerable outflow of the money to Mexico, going mostly to the state of Michoacán."[84] Paul Taylor found a similar situation in Chicago, where various bank clerks reported that most remittances were between $30 and $35 but could vary from $5 to $100 or even a few hundred dollars in one case. While the individual amounts were small, they were critical for families in central Mexico.[85]

For unskilled laborers, especially agricultural workers, remittances could make up for wages people could earn in Mexico. Gamio used wage data to show that in the US, an agricultural worker could earn six times as much as he usually did doing the same work in central Mexico to explain the prime motive for migration. The daily mean wage was 1.15 pesos or $.57 a day or $17.67 a month vs $2 a day in the most basic picking jobs in the US, and most jobs paid higher still.[86] Then, these same numbers show that a remittance of $20 a month could replace and slightly improve upon the amount that a person would earn for their family by staying in Mexico and could potentially vastly increase the amount. That is, for those whose labor migration went well. For many agricultural workers in Mexico, going to the US would at worst earn a family about the same amount as staying in Mexico, and had the possibility of a much greater return, especially if a person went further from the border in the US. Yet this is also why many families found themselves dependent upon repeat migrations north. The amounts made could improve their situation somewhat but was rarely enough to let someone leave the circular migrant life entirely.

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[84] George T Edson, "Mexicans in Gary Ind." US Department of Labor, Beaurau of Labor Statistics, Folder 13:28 Carton 13, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[85] Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States: Chicago and the Calumet Region*, U of California Publications in Economics, Vo 7, No 2, 1930, pg 162-163.

[86] Ibid 32-41.

Families and Circular Migration

As families became more dependent on remittances from migrants outside of their home communities, enormous pressures also came to bear on each individual family that participated in migration. Ana Rosas has reminded scholars of the social cost of migration for tens of thousands of families during the Bracero era. Men left their wives, often in the care of in-laws. Fathers left their children to see them again once a year perhaps. Those children often grew up in the care of relatives such as grandparents or an aunt, if both parents went. Many of these patterns first took root in the 1910s and '20s'.[87]

In Chicago, a Mexican migrant from Michoacán who was also a bank employee explained to Paul Taylor, "In my village about half of the men have come to the United States. Mostly women remain in Mexico. They are supported largely by money sent from the United States. Every day we sent about fifteen or twenty dollars to Mexico through our bank. They send it to Mexico and do not build up an account, or else they build it up to take it back. Also Post Office Orders are sent. The Mexicans don't save much here. They send it to Mexico and don't build up an account, or else they build it up to take it back. Only a few Mexicans buy property [in the US]."[88] Also in Chicago, Robert Redfield interviewed a couple who had gone back and forth in 1925, whom he identified as Mrs. and Mr G. The husband crossed the border and worked in San Antonio and sent money back; but his father-in-law urged him to return to take care of his family and after a year he returned. For a year, he tried to make a living in Mexico but found himself anxious to return to the US. Eventually, he left for the Midwest and took his wife with

[87] Ana Elizabeth Rosas, *Abrazando El Espíritu: Bracero Families Confront the US-Mexico Border* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2014).

[88] "Unknown Mexican", Interview Page 28, Folder 10:8, Carton 10, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

him and told Redfield that he was saving to bring other family members north.[89] Manuel Perez, a migrant from San Francisco de Rincón went north, leaving his family behind when his friends told him about the US. For several years he remitted money to support his wife and child, once sending about $200. Eventually, he returned and brought them to live in California, though he maintained that he planned to return to Guanajuato as part of the Acámbaro colony.[90] It is unknown if he did return to Jalisco. While migration could be regular, it was often not, yet this irregularity was part of the fabric of circular migration. The same dynamics could lead to permanent settlement, but intentions and plans changed, and people circulated back and forth as circumstances changed.

Many miners went back and forth across the border practically at will, forcing wages in northern Mexico to a level nearly comparable to wages in Arizona, as mentioned in chapter four. Jesus Gonzales, who we saw in chapter one, left his small shop in Jalisco because of the revolution and traveled across the US from Kansas to California before becoming a miner. His travels also took him to Torreón and across Chihuahua, but he found it difficult to leave the life of continuous migration and returned to the US. He made it clear to Gamio that to him, his time back in Mexico was not of a different nature than his migrant life in the US. He went where the mining work took him at the time, and then it took him north again.[91] Manuel Lomeli was one of many miners who initially kept their families in Mexico. A migrant who left for Miami, Arizona, when a friend told him of the money he could earn there said he did not plan to settle there.

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[89] Mr G and Mrs G, Mexicans in Chicago Field Journal, Folder 21, page 35, Robert Redfield Papers, Special Collections, University of Chicago, Chicago Illinois.

[90] Interview, La Videa de Manuel Perez, Folder 2:4, BANC FILM 2322 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[91] Vida de Jesus Gonzales, No 17, Folder 2, BANC FILM 2322 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

However, in 1923, after a dispute with a mining engineer, he returned to Torreón where his family lived but did not stay very long, and within a year, decided to return to the migrant life.[92]

The migrant life proved difficult for many migrants, as it forced families apart and remittances and savings were rarely enough to enable someone to permanently settle anywhere. This was a point Rosas made of the migrants of San Martine de Hidalgo, Jalisco, in the middle of the twentieth century, and one that was true for an earlier generation in the 1920s.[93] Many families were supported by regular remittances, but others were abandoned. One person in San Ignacio Cerro Gordo explained, "There in the United States, they are riding about in automobiles; here their families are without food to eat, and must eat nopal. Many- perhaps one third- don't write; one man with many children hasn't written for eight months. Two men from San Ignacio have families there, and here, too."[94] Corridos also explored this aspect of migration. It was common for migrant ballads to include stories of the home that is lost, of those who are left behind. *La Canción del Interior*, a ballad that Paul Taylor collected in Jalisco in 1932 tells one such story. Below is a selection from the *corrido*.

Canción del Interior[95]

Of those three coming along
Which one pleases you most
That one in the blue dress
Seems to me the best.

Come here, stop chewing,
Don't chew nixtamal now.
We are going to the United States
Where we will enjoy ourselves.

Hear the train now, Chinita,
Hear what whistles it gives,

[92] Vida de Manuel Lomeli, No 24, Folder 2:14, BANC FILM 2322 REEL 2, GNEG Box 2569, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[93] Rosas, *Abrazando El Espíritu*, University of California, 2014.

[94] Taylor, A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community, 43.

[95] Translation by Paul S. Taylor, "Cancion del Interior, Song of the Interior", Folder 26, Carton 1, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

Only one favor I ask of you,
That you won't cry over there.

Dearest, I am tired
And we are scarcely at Torreón,
So that I won't feel tired
Will you sing me a song.

What a charming song,
I have never heard it before,
Sing me still a prettier one,
And then I will sing to you.

I told the reenganchista
That I was coming back,
But that I was not coming alone,
That this time I would bring a companion.

Don't send me to Texas
Not to the State of Oklahoma,
They are disagreeable places
Where they hate one who smokes.

But the pay is going to start
So that my sweetheart may spend it,
Half is for her
And half for my family.

Here, don't take advantage,
You enjoy the best there is,
You know that you were marries
And under obligation.

Yesterday afternoon I got a letter
That my parents sent me
In which seeping they asked
And begged me to come back.

I don't know what to do
In order to go to my country,
I begin to think
That here I leave this woman.

I remember an ungrateful one
Whom, at one time, I loved,
But it has been my price
That I have not loved her since.

The birds no longer sing
And the stars give me no light,
The flowers have no scent
Because love is lacking there.

Chinita, I charge you
That when you think of me,
Ah, never, never forget
That I was your adorer.

But I was so unfortunate
In loving that women
That I have sworn by the Eternal
Never to love another.
.....

In this story a repete migrant went north after coming back to Mexico. He is going now with his girlfriend, but neglected to tell her of his wife and family back in Mexico. He says that once in the US, half of his wages will go to his family, and half to his girlfriend. His parents ask through letters that he come back home to his family, yet he does not want to leave his lover. In the end he leaves his girlfriend, knowing that he had to keep his obligation, and ask that she remember him. This corrido seems at first like the tell of a brokenhearted bracro who has to return to his obligations, yet it could also have been a cautionary tell to braceros, asking them to remember their families when they went north.

Lacario Lopez, who in the first chapter explained how he sent back $30 every two weeks to his wife and children in remittances, explained how life apart was straining his family. He told Taylor:

> We live here like birds of the air. As long as there is work in the steel mills, we stay, when work closes down, we are away to any place we can hear of steady work. We make more money in the mills, and for that reason we stay here as long as there is work. I have no other outlook than to keep on working until I die. I was a farmer in Mexico. I raised corn, wheat and bees. If I had $2000, I would rent a farm here, bring my family and live contently. My wife wants me to send for her. Women's work is easier here than in Mexico. My wife didn't want to send me a picture of the children for fear the picture would satisfy my homesickness and I would not want to return to Mexico. Any place is good to live in if there is plenty of work.[96]

For Lopez, the goal of migration was directly tied to his family in Mexico. He had migrated in order to provide for his family during the revolution, and used the money to keep the family in their home. Rosas has written about the role that pictures played in keeping migrant families together, as symbolic links and messages about the duty of a father and his place in the

[96] Locario Lopez, Interviews, Folder 11:34, Carton 11, Paul Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

family.[97] Yet these patterns were already in place by the 1920s. Lopez's wife wanted him to return to the point that she refused to have her picture taken. Similar scenes played out throughout Mexico as people struggled to keep families together and maintain ties through migration.

The large extended family of Miguel Venegas used letters and pictures to keep the family together through the 1920s and 1930s. In nearly a hundred letters, he keeps his father, mother, and brother back in Mexico informed about life in the US, business prospects, and his family's life. His correspondence with family members in Jalisco often included long descriptions of events big and small meant to keep the family not only informed but as part of a single unit despite the distance. Letters also included frequent pictures of themselves, their children, items from their store. His letters make clear that like many others, his family thought themselves as exiled, in the US until things got better so that they may return. Yet he didn't return until a short visit in 1931, and then moved back to his home town in the late 1930s, but then World War II sent him back to the US.[98]

José Rocha, a barber from Leon and Celaya Guanajuato who left for the US on the insistence of his brothers in the first chapter, traveled across the US but got tired of the migrant life. He had savings and decided to go back to Leon. There, he learned that his brothers had become successful in New York and as he put it, "I stayed a year in Leon and got tired of being there for I earned very little in the barber trade and anyways I wanted to keep on adventuring so

[97] Rosas, *Abrazando El Espíritu*, University of California, 2014, 112-143.

[98] María Teresa Venegas, *Letters Home: Mexican Exile Correspondence from Los Angeles, 1927-1932* ([The Author], 2012).

that I started again on the road to the United States."[99] He, like others, found the migrant life difficult to put down, even after he had accumulated the savings he had hoped to build when he had originally left.

Agapito Martinez and his family, who were mentioned in the previous chapter, had a similar story when then they returned to Mexico. From Guanajuato, Martinez left during the revolution and worked on railroads and odd jobs in Arizona before going to California and marrying Leonaides Viveros, another migrant who had come with her family years previously. Despite a well-paying job in a factory in Los Angeles, he had always wanted to go back. So in 1925, with $2000 in savings, he moved his family to Abasolo Guanajuato, a town southwest of Irapuato. His daughter, Ofelia remembered it as a hard time, but the family tried to make it work. They created a small store in town, but as relatives and townspeople asked them for loans, or took goods on credit, the family struggled. So in 1927, they decided to go back to the US with the intention of returning. They left many of their belongings in place, intending to return, but they never did.[100]

Migrating back and forth created problems for everyone who participated, with uncertain work, changing locations, and changing legal status. Many did it because of the opportunity and adventure, others however because they saw no choice in their situation. Once they embarked on a migrant's life, many found it difficult if not impossible to return and settle down: they found the money they saved was never quite enough, or some unforeseen situation would make them go back to the US. Some left intending to permanently settle in the US, others intended to go for

[99] Vida de Jose Rocha, Folder 2, BANC FILM 2322 REEL 1, GNEG Box 2568, Manuel Gamio Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California

[100] Ofelia Silva and Manuel Martinez, Interview by Daniel Morales, January 15 2015, East of East: Mapping Community Narratives in South El Monte and El Monte, SEMAP, El Monte California

short periods, or one more season, or their intentions changed over time. Whatever the case, when people did migrate, they did so within a migrant economy in which information networks, family links, local and regional job patterns took people far away but kept them close.

Migrants and Community's views on Migration

While government officials, newspaper writers, and public intellectuals argued about the merits of migration, the migrants and others were having a similar debate in the public sphere, in fiction and newspapers, in letters, *corridos*, and encounters in towns across the country. Like the family stories in the last section, these disputes reflected the deep ambivalence people felt about having to migrate and the changes returning migrants were having on communities and families.

In the 1920s several *novelas* on the migrant experience were published, these were primarily written by Mexican exile writers who spent several years in the United States. These writers for the most part wished for a pre-revolutionary Mexico, and used the novels to show the ways migration undermined traditional values. Exiled journalist, Teodoro Torres worked of *La Prensa* in the 1910s before eventually going back to Mexico and in 1935 wrote *La Patria Perdida*.[101] In the novel a Mexican migrant comes to the United States and creates a farm in Missouri before going back to Mexico and realizing the Mexico of his youth no longer exists, he finds the peaceful hacienda life he wishes for not in Mexico but in Missouri.[102] Unlike Torres, Conrado Espinoza saw Mexico as the only option for Mexican migrants. After writing for *La Prensa* and other publications Espinoza wrote *El Sol de Texas*, a morality tale of two Mexican migrant families who go north and run into moral and material ruin, only the one that embraces

[101] Teodoro Torres, *La Patria Perdida* (México D.F. Ediciones Botas: 1935).

[102] Craig Dennison, "Mexico de Afuera in Northern Missouri: The Creation of Profiriato Society in Americas Heartland" *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* 2 (2010).

repatriation back to Mexico has any hope of redemption.[103] Daniel Venegas came to Los Angeles in this era and in the 1920s published the newspaper, *El Malcriado* and many plays, and a novel about a Mexican migrant, *Las Adventuras de Don Chipote*. Like Espinoza his novel is a moral tale of the problems of migration, but in his case it is not economic but cultural ruin that threatens Mexicans. Seeing American jazz age materialism as the opposite of Catholic Mexico, Chipote is only saved when he is forced to return to Mexico to his wife.[104]

Much like the letters and *corridos* that urged men to return, many *corridos* on both sides of the border dealt with the desirability and morality of migration. In *Platica Entre dos Rancheros*, a returning migrant boast about his success in the United States.[105]

Norteño:	
Si versa como este bonito	*If you could only see how nice*
Esos Estados Unidos,	*The United States is;*
Por eso los mexicanos,	*That is why the Mexicans*
por allá estamos engridos.	*Are crazy about it.*
No te imaginas lo que es	*You can't imagine how it is*
vivir como un licenciado	*to life like a lawyer,*
Buena camisa, buen traje,	*with good shirt, good suit,*
Buen abrigo y buen calzado.	*good overcoat and shoes.*
…	…
No me quedo que desear,	*I had nothing more to wish;*
Conocí el estado de Texas,	*I knew the state of Texas,*
Allí yo llegue a tener	*And there I got as many*
Una docena de viejas.	*As a dozen women.*

[103] Conrado Espinoza, *El Sol de Texas*, (re-printed, Arte Publico Press, 2007, original 1926)

[104] Daniel Venegas, *Las Adventuras de Don Chipote* (re-printed, Arte Publico Press, 2000, original 1928)

[105] "Platica Entre Dos Rancheros", Mexican Folklore Survey, Federal Writers Project, Box 187 Folder 3, 306, Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles CA

De esas mujeres bonitas
Puras güeras de primera
Esas que van por las calles
Todas vestidas de seda.

Some of these pretty women,
Classy blondes, the kind
Who go through the streets
All dressed in silk

The migrant who has been in the north then tells of his fighting exploits as a boxer in the US and criticizes those who have stayed behind for their devotion to the church, the Cristero cause, and their lack of initiative.

Pero Tú nunca has salido
Del rancho y de tu doctrina
Creyendo en monos de palo
Y disque en la virgen divina.

But you have never left
The ranch, or your parish school:
You still believe in wooden images
And in the devine virgin.

No, hombre quítate esa venda,
No te dejes explotar
De hombres que dicen ser sabios
Y que estudian para robar.
…
Pero si cree uno en milagros
Y en las "animas benditas
Y en irle a besar la mano
A los señores curitas.

Come, man, unbandage your eyes:
Don't let yourself be exploited
By men who claim to be wise
And who studyonly to rob.
….
And Here one believes in miracles
And in blessed souls
And in going to the priest
In order to kiss his hand!

Y créelo que en capital
Aquí nos tiene cegados
Para podernos robar
Porque son muy desgraciados.

But believe me, the capitalist
Have blinded us
In order to be able to rob us;
They are a lot of scoundrels.

No es que yo hablo de más
De los ricos cabezones
Pero tú ya bien lo vez
Que son puritos bribones.

It isn't that I want to talk
About those rich men,
But you can see for yourself
That they are terrible thieves.

Hay nos pintan el infierno	*They picture hell to us*
Y el diablo con mucha cola	*And the devil with lots of tail,*
Tanto como San Ramón Nonato	*As well as San Ramon Nonato*
Y también a la anima sola.	*And also the immortal soul.*
Nada de eso valedor	*Pay no attention to that, partner;*
No te creas de esas boberas, son puritas vaciladas	*Don't believe those follies;*
	They are simple nonsense,
Son puras conseguideras.	*They are simple frauds.*

A this point the man who has not been north intervenes, defends the catholic church, and takes out a knife and threatens to beat the returning migrant.

Voy que con este instrumento	*With this little instrument*
Yo te quito lo relajo	*I'll change your tune;*
Aunque seas gran boxeador	*even though you're a great boxer,*
Ahorita te saco el cuajo.	*I'll take out your rennet.*
Y le enseno un puñalón	*And he showed him such a knife*
Al norteñito payaso,	*To the clown from the north,*
Que luego se le engrifaron	*That it gave him the shivers*
Todos los del espinazo.	*Up and down his spine.*
Y le agarró tal temblor	*It gave him such a fright*
Al ver tan filoso acero,	*So see such a terrible blade*
Que se hincó a pedir perdón,	*That he knelt to beg*
El uno al otro ranchero.	*The pardon of the other ranchero.*
(Norteño)	*(The migrant)*
No vayas a dar por Dio	*Don't his me, for God's sake;*
Por San Antonio bendito,	*In the name of the blessed San Antonio,*
No vayas a dar con fierro	*Don't strike me with the blade*
No me péguese hermanito.	*Don't hit me, little brother.*
(El que no había ido al norte)	*(He who had not left)*
No que eras colmillona	*Aren't you the hold fellow who*

Que en el norte te has rifado	*Had done so much in the north?*
Para que te incas de rodillas,	*What are you on your knees for?*
Levántate desgraciado.	*Get up, miserable wretch.*
No que no crees en los santos	*Since you don't believe in saints*
No tampoco en el demonio,	*Not even in the devil,*
Para que invocas cobarde	*Then, coward, why invoke*
Al glorioso San Antonio.	*Glorious San Antonio?*
Me parece que eres maldito	*It seems to me you are bad*
Nada más de puro pico,	*Nothing more than a loud mouth;*
Por eso de compasión	*That's why, feeling sorry for you*
No te doy en el hocico.	*And won't punch you in the nose*.

In another *corrido* in the Mexican Folklore Survey, the singer addresses the criticism of those who have gone north. These criticisms were well known in migrant communities, and many responded in song and print. In *Defensa de los Nortenos*, the unknown singer defends the decision of migrating. He addresses the criticisms in communities and in the press, saying migration was done out of necessity, as a result of Mexico structural inequality and lays the fault on the countries economic and political condition rather than the individual.[106]

Lo que dicen de nosotros	*What they say about us*
Casi todo es realidad;	*Is nearly all true,*
Mas salimos del terreno	*But we left the country*
Por pura necesidad.	*From sheer necessity.*
Que muchos vienen facetos	*I myself could have told you*
Yo también se los dijera;	*That many come back boasting;*
Por eso la prensa chica	*That is why the local press*

[106] "Defensa de los Nortenos," Mexican Folklore Survey, Federal Writers Project, Box 187 Folder 3, 306, Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles CA [Translation edited by Daniel Morales]

Tuvo donde echar tijera

Pero la culpa la tienen
Esos ingratos patrones
Que no les dan a su gente
Ni aun cuando porte chaqueta.

No es porque hablo del país:
Pero claro se los digo
Que muchos trabajadores
Ensenan hasta el ombligo.
…
Siempre el peón es agobiado,
Tratándolo con fiereza,
Donde le miran los pies
Quieren verle la cabeza.

Lo Tratan como un esclavo
No como útil servidos
Que derrama para el rico
Hasta el último sudor.

Yo no digo que en el Norte
Se va uno a estar muy sentado,
Ni aún cuando porte chaqueta
Lo hacen a uno diputado.

Allí se va a trabajar
Macizo, al lo americano,
Pero alcanza uno a ganar
Más que cualquier paisano.
…
Que lo digan mis paisanos,
Si yo les estoy mintiendo,
Porque no hay que preguntar

Speaks harshly about them.

But those who are to blame
Are those unkind employers,
Who don't give their people
Enough to buy a jacket.

I'm not criticizing the country,
But I certainly tell you
That many of the laborers
Are naked to their navels.
…
The peon is always burdened,
Is treated with cruelty;
The rich should like to see his head
Where they see his feet.

They treat him like a slave,
Not like a useful servant,
Who pours out for the rich
His last drop of sweat.

I don't say that in the north
One is going to well off;
Nor because one wears a suit
Is one elected to Congress.

One has to work there,
Hard, in the American fashion,
But one succeeds in earning
More than any of our countrymen.
…
Let my countryman say
If I am telling a lie,
For its needless to ask about

Lo que claro estamos viendo.

Mucha gente así lo ha dicho:
Dizque no somos patriotas
Porque les vamos a servir
A los infames patoas.

Pero que se abran trabajos
Y que paguen buen dinero,
Y no queda un mexicano
Que se vaya al extranjero.

Ansia tenemos de volver
A nuestra patria idolatrada,
Pero qué le hemos de hacer
Si está la patria arruinada.
…
(a los emigrantes)
Que no vengan de facetos
Les digo a mis compañeros;
Amigos, yo no presumo
Porque soy de los rancheros.

Oren guarden y decoro
Esos que vienen del Norte,
Si no quieren que la prensa
A toditos nos recorte.
…
Yo ya me voy para el Norte
Amigos, no se los niego;
Ahí les dejo a sus riquitos
A que los toree Juan Diego.

Muchachos, yo los convido
A la Nación extranjera;

What we can clearly see.

Many people have said
That we are not patriotic
Because we go to serve
For those accursed people.

But let them give us jobs
And pay us decent wages;
Not one Mexican then
Will go to foreign lands.

we're anxious to return again
to our adored country'
but what can we do about it
if the country is ruined?
…
(towards migrants)
Don't come back boasting,
I say to my companions;
"Friends, I don't put on airs,
Because I am just a farmer."

Let them behave themselves,
Those who come back from the north
If they don't want the newspapers
To speak ill of us.
…
Now I am leaving for the north;
Friends, I do not deny it;
I leave you with your rich fellows
Let Juan Diego be bothered by it.

Men, I invite you
To the foreign nation;

No le hace que algunos digan	*Don't be bothered if they say*
Que somos chucha cuerera.	*That we are mercenary.*

The singer addresses returning migrants, telling them that they should not boast about their status but also states that though hard work one can make much more in the US than in Mexico. While he speaks of migrant's love of country and the desire to return, at the end he again leaves to the north and invites fellow Mexicans to join him in migrating.

Was circular migration a necessity or an opportunity? Was it good for men, families and communities? Much like the migrants in the *corridos* in the first chapter dealing with the journey north, migration held an ambiguous place in the public sphere. Politicians, newspapers, writers and academics debated migration throughout Mexico, and communities and families engaged in a different, but not unlinked, debate on the desirability of migration. The ambivalence about migration was reflected in interviews in rural communities. When Paul Taylor asked farmers in Jalisco about their interests in migrating, most expressed a desire to go, but others was hostile. One man said, "no, I won't wish to go; it is too far. This is mi tierra", when pressed about migrants leaving he responded "yes, and they return" a comment Taylor thought was less than genuine.[107] While most saw migration as an undesirable, there was broad disagreement on whether fault lay with the migrants as elites and newspapers often said, or with structural problems in a society that remained agrarian and unequal.

Circular Migration by 1930

In the second half the 1920s, the Mexican government moved towards a more restrictive policy towards migration. The views of the government and elites remained the same—that

[107] Taylor, A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community, 53.

migration was a tragedy born of the revolution and opportunist labor agents and *coyotes*, and that it was best for people to stay home and for those in the US to return to rebuild the nation. What had changed was a willingness to build a migration regulatory apparatus, seeking to reduce migration or at least steer it towards legal entry into the US allowing only those who had the proper paperwork from both governments to legally enter. The government build up the Departamento de Migración, but not to the level of manpower or funding that it would have taken to truly make a difference, and instead relied on propaganda and cooperation with agencies, companies and local governments. It was an effort made to statisfy the political imperative to act, without eliciting too much pushback on the ground. There is little evidence that this reduced the numbers of Mexicans going. However, it could be said to have helped alleviate the worst problems migrants faced at the border.

People migrated whether they had met all the requirements or not. Despite building the machinery of enforcement, there were far too few agents for too many people to effectively enforce US immigration law across the interior of Mexico. Migrants knew the chances of being stopped by Departamento de Migración or INS agents were low. The National Railways, local governments, and others had little interests in aiding the government. In fact, their interests were to aid migrants, who were their customers, constituents, and neighbors. Migrants themselves did not see a difference, not when all of this migration had been perfectly fine for years. Something authorities themselves struggled with as they faced realities at the border.

By the end of the 1920s, circular migration had become deeply engrained in many communities in Central Mexico. These areas included Guanajuato, San Luis Potosí, Aguascalientes, Jalisco, and Michoacán, in addition to the large flow of migration originating in northern Mexico. These were the communities that had sent migration out into northern Mexico

before the Revolution and continued to do so into the 1930s. The area was the engine of migration in the early twentieth century, especially those towns that disproportionally sent migrants north. In these places migrant networks allowed information to pass from person to person, not just family members and close friends, but distant acquaintances and people migrants may have never met. In many places, those who may have once objected to migration came to see it as a way out, for the Cristero war or for the general economic stagnation after the revolution. And so municipal presidents handed out *salvaconductos,* and elites made small loans to finance the journeys, and one person told another how to get a job. In some towns, this became self-reinforcing enough to continue long past the original impediments to migration. Migration, then, was not an isolated or isolating activity. Not anymore, at least. It was embedded in the social world of the places migrants came from. People traveled in groups, with those they knew, with those who had made the journey before. It is only through this expansion of the social imaginary of people that migration became not just a temporary jump during the late 1910s, but a continuous circuit that by 1930 encompassed more than ten percent of all people born in Mexico.

CHAPTER 6

"El Retorno"

Migration in the Era of Repatriation, 1930-1942

When the Great Depression began, approximately 400,000 Mexican migrants and Mexican Americans in the United States "returned" to Mexico in what have come to be known as the repatriation drives. The Mexican government encouraged and coordinated repatriation efforts, but it did not have the resources to sustain their efforts given the overwhelming numbers of returnees. Faced with dire economic circumstances and little government support, the repatriates fell back on local community networks. It is through a social history of repatriation that I demonstrate how returnees' relationships with social and state structures, such as local, state, and federal governments as well as repatriation societies, land-reform organizations, the Catholic Church, and the returnees' own families, shaped the experience of return. The process of adjustment and resettlement was difficult but not impossible through the support of various social structures. In particular, I highlight the importance during the repatriation drives of the same migrant networks that migrants built and used when they first migrated to the United States. These town-based networks provided structural support for not only resettlement and re-assimilation but also for remigration to the United States in the latter part of the decade. Moreover, these networks provided an entry into the land reform movement in Mexico for returning migrants. However, land reform did not resolve the structural causes of migration, and in the late 1930s, and especially in the 1940s, a second generation from central Mexico turned again to migration as an economic survival strategy. By the 1940s, a mixed agrarian-remittance economy was taking shape that would drive Mexican migration through the Bracero period and beyond.

Most theoretical models developed by social scientists to explain why migration starts, continues, and declines for the most part neglect the roles of changes in the host country over time, such as economic depressions and deportations.[1] This chapter argues that the largest decline in Mexican migration in history occurred precisely for these reasons. The largest economic downturn and largest immigrant expulsions in US history that occurred in this era had a profound impact on society in central and northern Mexico. As hundreds of thousands of people returned, they reshaped the contours of communities. In this way, the story of Mexican repatriation in the 1930s not only tells us about how migration decreases, but also the ways community-migrant networks change, adapt, and endure in the face of economic recessions and state attempts to end that migration. Within the literature on repatriation drives, the repatriation of Mexicans during the Great Depression is seen as the end of an era of the migration that started in the early 20th century, and migration in the 1940s is seen as almost an entirely separate process. This chapter argues for the continuing connections between migrant sending areas before and after the Depression in the form of the social structures and town networks that continued in the 1930s.

The journey Mexican migrants/repatriates took in returning to Mexico did not stop at the border, nor did it stop even when they reached their destination. People continued to move in Mexico, and for many, especially second-generation Mexican-Americans, migration back meant to the United States rather than Mexico. Just as the story of the repatriates did not end at the

[1] Hein de Hass, "Migration System Formation and Decline: A theoretical inquiry into the self-perpetuating and seld-undermining dynamics of migration processes," *International Migration Institute*, 2009. Douglass S. Massey, Joaquin Arango, Graeme Hugo, Ali Kouaouci, Adelana Pellegrina and J. Edward Taylor, "Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal," *Population and Development Review* 19 No.3 (1993), 431-466; Douglass S. Massey, Joaquin Arango, Graeme Hugo, Ali Kouaouci, Adelana Pellegrina and J. Edward Taylor, "An Evaluation of International Migration Theory: The North American Case," *Population and Development Review* 20 No.4 (1994), 699-751.

border or at their arrival in a location, neither should historians' account of their migration in this era. Most of the scholars who have written on repatriation have focused primarily on the US side of the experience, the policies and actions of the American and Mexican governments, and the struggles of Mexican communities in the US during this time period.[2] Far less scholarly attention has focused on the world of repatriates in Mexico. This chapter builds on new scholarship that has called into question the Mexican government's role in repatriation and follows returning migrants' stories across the border into the interior of Mexico. The Mexican government's promotion of repatriation as a means of nation-building and building a new modernity, rather than considering repatriates' actual needs, did not help the crisis and may have worsened their situation.

While most of the scholarship on repatriation within Mexico has been focused on the Mexican government's actions, especially its creating and promotion of settlement colonies, recent estimates show that only 5% of returning migrants went to colonies. Fifteen percent went to urban centers and 80% went back to small towns in Guanajuato, San Luis Potosí and elsewhere, where circular migration had already become part of the social fabric of rural central

[2] Francisco Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez have done much to bring the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of people in the early 1930s into the light and public consciousness. Yet their account is primarily concerned with the injustices committed on the US side, which lead them to praise the Mexican government's efforts at assisting repatriates and establishing colonies, and does not describe what repatriation looked like on the other side of the border. Abraham Hoffman likewise kept his inquiry to the US side and government sources.[2] Lorenzo Cardoso wrote from the Mexican perspective but rarely left the Mexican government's sources, which gave him a similar perspective on the benevolence of the Mexican government's efforts. Overall, migration literature on the repatriation assume that the Mexican government attempted to protect the welfare of Mexican migrants. Newer scholarship has questioned this assumption, Fernando Alanis Enciso's and Georgina Escoto Molina's studies on repatriation in San Luis Potosí, government colonies, and adjustment in Guanajuato, which I will elaborate on below, have shown the extent to which the Mexican government's efforts fell short. Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995). Lawrence A Cardoso, Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897-1931: Socio-Economic Patterns (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980). Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso, *Que se queden allá: el gobierno de México y la repatriación de mexicanos en Estados Unidos* (1934-1940) (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 2007); Georgina Escoto Molina, "Migrantes guanajuantenses y las repatriaciones de 1929-1935" (MA Tesis. Escuela Nacional de Antropologia E Historia, 2010).

Mexico.[3] Once in Mexico, the returnees' paths took different turns, as they reestablished their lives. Those who went to colonies mostly did not do well. While a few colonies succeeded, most did not and people drifted away. In urban centers, those who had come with resources, skills, and social capital did well while those who lacked these things struggled to survive. The Mexican towns to which migrants returned, the occupations they took, and their adjustments to Depression era Mexico were not determined by the Mexican government's policies but instead by their families, their social capital, and their networks.

Most migrants went to their home regions, where they made use of their social capital and home-region networks. Repatriates adjusted to rural life to varying degrees; many joined ongoing *agraristas* (people active in the land-reform) movements. In the late 1930s and especially the 1940s after the creation of the Bracero Program, many repatriates, especially those of the second generation, began participating again in migration circuits. By the 1940's, an agricultural/migrant economy was beginning to take shape through circular migration in which migrating and holding agricultural land were not opposed but rather in which migration formed part of the supporting structure of rural life in central Mexico.

The Great Depression and Repatriation

The collapse of the US and world economies starting in 1929 led to the largest wave of return migration in history, causing significant upheaval in the lives of those involved. For Mexicans in the United States, the crisis was first felt at the end of the 1929 harvest when tens of thousands of Mexican workers were laid off, though most continued to live in the US as conditions deteriorated through 1930. In late 1930 large numbers of people started to go back to

[3] Fernando Saúl Alanis Encinos, *Que se queden allá: El gobierno de México y la repatriación de mexicanos en Estados Unidos* (El Colegio de San Luis, 2007), 56.

Mexico. These numbers expanded exponentially in 1931 and 1932 before dropping significantly in 1933. In all, an estimated 400,000 people went back to Mexico, about 40% of them American citizens.[4] This occurred despite the fact that conditions in Mexico during the Great Depression were not much better than those in the US.

Repatriation was not a single policy. Rather, it encompassed a range of practices that encouraged or coerced people to go to Mexico. Looking to scapegoat Mexicans for the economic downturn and free jobs for white "Americans" (including white non-citizens), the US government carried out policies designed to expel Mexicans and Mexican-Americans from the country. The Immigration Bureau (later the Immigration and Naturalization Service) and state governments deported thousands of people of Mexican ethnicity regardless of citizenship. Both state institutions also provided logistical support for "voluntary" efforts to leave the country. The vast majority of the logistical support was organized by local civic institutions, through state and private welfare agencies, and even private organizations like the American Legion. One common strategy these organizations used was offering to pay the cost of return for men and families, usually targeting those who were unemployed or on relief.[5]

[4] These numbers are different than the commonly accepted 500,000-1,000,000 figure and 60% of whom were citizens, these come from the work of Balderrama and Rodriguez, and which I disagree with, my reasoning is below.

[5] For a longer explanation of how Repatriation was carried out in the United States, see: Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: Univ of Arizona Pr, 1974); Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*, Revised edition (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006); Francisco E. Balderrama, *In Defense of La Raza, the Los Angeles Mexican Consulate, and the Mexican Community, 1929 to 1936* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982); George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*, Reprint (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Dennis Nodin Valdes, *Al Norte: Agricultural Workers in the Great Lakes Region, 1917-1970*, (Austin: Univ of Texas Pr, 1991); 1. Cybelle Fox, *Three Worlds of Relief: Race, Immigration, and the American Welfare State from the Progressive Era to the New Deal* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012); Stephanie Lewthwaite, *Race, Place, and Reform in Mexican Los Angeles: A Transnational Perspective, 1890-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009); Camille Guerin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and the American Dream: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

The number of people leaving the US grew from thousands following the end of the 1930 harvest to tens of thousands throughout 1931 as organized repatriation drives accelerated and increased the volume of migration, creating an impossible situation at the border. Tens of thousands of people were stranded there, either because of bureaucratic difficulties with papers, logistical/organizational incompetence, or worse, because American officials often had not secured transportation south to the migrants' hometowns before sending them to the border. Even those who arrived of their own volition, in trains and cars with all they possessed, faced difficulties in getting the paperwork needed to take their belongings south. Not all returns were voluntary. Speaking to *La Opinion*, Antonio Lomeli described how in mining towns in Arizona like Morenci people were repatriated without legal processing. Local authorities filled up cars with migrants and Mexican Americans and drove them across the border deep into Mexico, all the way to Leon Guanajuato, six hundred miles into the interior.[6]

The most extensive study of 1930s Mexican repatriation was written by Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez. Their book *Decade of Betrayal* is primarily concerned with the role the US government played in sending hundreds of thousands of Mexicans and their US citizen children forcibly to Mexico. The study chronicles the workings of the Mexican government and its policies based on government documents from the repatriation era, but takes the policies at face value without analyzing their real effects. The same dependence on government sources led them to focus on government colonies when examining the question of

[6] Interview, Antonio Mendez Lomeli, OH 1297, Mexican American Oral History Project, California State University Fullerton, Fullerton California.

resettlement, even when most of their interview subjects clearly did not go to resettlement colonies.[7]

Many historians have debated the exact number for the number of people who repatriated back to Mexico in the 1930s. Estimates of repatriation have ranged from 300,000 to over a million people.[8] A group of demographers recently estimated the number of people repatriated while taking into account circular migration. Because of a circular movement of migrants across the border, they argue, many repatriates would at some point have gone back to Mexico regardless of repatriation. These scholars put the number of repatriates at 176,720 over the number that would have gone back regardless, about 40% of them American-born.[9] What they miss, however, is that the repatriation was a highly disruptive event for those involved. While statistically many people were likely to go to Mexico, it is not a certainty that any *particular*

[7] Balderrama and Rodriguez's book suffers from its reliance on one-sided sources. For example, it claims that most Mexican migrants being repatriated had little contact with Mexico before repatriation. This outlook is based primarily on interviews with deported children who later returned to the US Balderrama, *Decade of Betrayal.*

[8] Balderrama pointed out that the US State Department estimated a total of 345,000 Mexican repatriates between 1930 and 1935, while the SRE in Mexico put the official tally at 422,831 over the 1930s. Mexican newspapers claimed much higher figures: El Universal counted 2,000,000 while Excelsior said 75,000 had arrived from Los Angeles alone during three years. He split the difference between the documented arrivals and the numbers given by newspapers and officials to arrive at his own estimate of a million people. This is more than double the number Abraham Hoffman arrived at several decades before. He used the statistics compiled by Paul Taylor, the Departamento de Migración Mexicano, and Los Angeles county records to arrive at a number of 415,000 people. While Mercedes Carreras de Velasco used Mexican SRE, INM and MMS to arrive at a more modest 311,717 people, though her study only covers up to 1933. The most recent estimate was by Fernando Saúl Alanis Encinos who used similar records argue for 425,000 people between 1930 and 1940. Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 150-151. Abraham Hoffman, Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939 (Tucson: Univ of Arizona Pr, 1974). Mercedes Carrera de Velasco, *LOS MEXICANOS QUE DEVOLVIÓ LA CRISIS, 1929-1932*., (México, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 198 Págs., 1974). Michael B. Katz, Mark J. Stern, and Jamie J. Fader, "The Mexican Immigration Debate: The View from History," *Social Science History* 31 (no. 2, Summer 2007), 157-89.

[9]The demographers used census information to estimate the number of migrants that would be expected regardless of repatriation and compared it against the actual population in the US in 1940, they came up with 176,720 people or about 14% of the ethnic Mexican population in 1930. When circular migration is included, the numbers of repatriates are 355,000. This analysis gives historians the best estimate yet on returning children and their citizenship, and its estimate is roughly in line with previous studies. Brian Gratton and Emily Merchant, "Immigration, Repatriation, and Deportation: The Mexican-Origin Population in the United States, 1920–1950," *International Migration Review* 47, no. 4 (December 1, 2013): 944–75.

person would go back during 1930s, or ever. Although my census study discussed in chapter 2 included many individuals who were unlikely to settle permanently in the US, these individuals may or may not have returned in the period during the study. And even if a particular person or family might theoretically go back during later decades, the accelerated return process often involved forced removal from the US, which left migrants unable to bring the savings and/or goods they would have returned with if they had not been forced to leave in the early 1930s.

The census study I undertook in Chapter 2 is geared towards showing the paths taken by a random sample of Mexican migrants, showing how common geographical mobility was. As such it was not designed to estimate migration or repatriation numbers. I am inclined to agree with estimates that put the number between 350,000 and 415,000 returnees, rather than the higher estimates, which are based on much weaker documentation. The more important point is that the number of people returning in such a short time was unprecedented and strained the resources of the Mexican government and local communities beyond their limits. As a social historian of Mexican migration in the early 20th century, I am less concerned about the total numbers than by the routes/circuits people traveled, where they were going, when, and how. It is to these questions that I devote the rest of this chapter.

Rhetoric vs Reality: The Mexican Government's Role in Repatriation

The Mexican government's response to the Depression, to the suffering by Mexicans in the US, and to the actions of American governments and organizations, was to encourage and actively promote repatriation. But, despite a strong rhetoric supporting repatriation, the Mexican government was not prepared for the scale of the Depression, much less the size of the

repatriation flow in the early 1930s.[10] The government did not have the funds nor the ability to carry out logistical planning to help people return, much less care for them when they arrived, or create sustainable *colonias*. However, these weaknesses did not stop the Mexican government from becoming an active participant in the repatriation drives.

Post-revolutionary rhetoric in Mexico had condemned migration and, in this vein, some public intellectuals, government officials, and two presidents of Mexico (Rubio and Cárdenas) saw in the Depression an opportunity to bring highly skilled workers back to Mexico. In January of 1930, President Pascual Ortiz Rubio visited the United States, during which he gave a widely disseminated speech inviting Mexicans to return home.[11] His call was echoed by other federal leaders in Mexico, the Mexico City press, and local consuls in the US. The appeal to repatriate was part of the Mexican state's activist approach to fighting the Depression. After 1934, President Lázaro Cárdenas used the full force of government to intervene in the economy, nationalizing industries and redistributing land, and also expressed support for repatriates. Many looked to the Mexican President as someone who sympathized with their plight, and thousands of people sent both Rubio and Cárdenas letters, asking for their help.

Within the intellectual and arts world, no less than Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo—who were working on the Ford murals in Detroit at the time—encouraged Mexicans in the US to return to Mexico. The return voyage was viewed as a joyous event in many communities featuring speakers and departure and welcome parties. In Mexican *barrios* across the US, this sentiment was widely shared. Bartolo Ortíz, a popular singer in San Antonio in this period sang various ballads about repatriation, in one in the *Corrido de California*, he expresses a common

[10] IV-111-20, Archivo de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores México DF

[11] Janurary 4 1930, *El Universal* de Mexico D.F.

message in ballads--the desirability of returning to Mexico over staying in a nation that has rejected them.[12] An excerpt is below:

Vuela, vuela, palomita,	*Fly, fly, little dove,*
con tu sombrero en las manos,	*with your hat in your hand,*
ande y dile a Ortiz Rubio	*go and tell Ortiz Rubio*
que allá van los mexicanos.	*that there go the Mexicans.*
Ortiz Rubio les promete	*Ortiz Rubio promises them*
de la frontera pa' allá,	*that the Mexicans who leave*
que el mexicano que salga	*will get travel fare*
su pase se le dará.	*from the border to their homes.*
Unos van canta y canta	*Some go singing,*
otros pobres van dormidos	*other unfortunate ones sleep,*
pensando en su propiedad	*thinking of their property*
que quedó en los Estados Unidos.	*left behind in the United States.*
Unos andan asustados	*Some are afraid,*
les dicen a sus hermanos,	*and tell their brothers*
que si quieren trabajar	*that if they want to work,*
tienen que ser ciudadanos.	*they have to become citizens.*
En Mexicali y Nogales	*In Mexicali and Nogales*
En Piedras Negras y El Paso	*in Piedras Negras and El Paso,*
se ven muchos compatriotas	*you can see many countrymen*
que van para el terronazo.	*that are going back home.*
En el Pueblo San Fernando	*In the town of San Fernando*
esto no es cosa de risa	*it's not something to laugh about,*
allí bloquearon el pueblo	*they blocked off the town*
el miércoles de ceniza.	*on an Ash Wednesday.*
Hicieron un gran alarme,	*They created a great panic,*
tengan esto muy presente,	*remember this well,*
en el Barrio de Rebote	*in the Barrio del Rebote*
allí juntaron la gente.	*they rounded up the people.*
Exigían el pasaporte	*They asked for passports,*
mujeres y niños llorando	*women and children crying,*
se llevaron a mi papá,	*they took away my father-*
sólo Dios sabe hasta cuándo.	*God knows when I'll see him.*

[12] "Corrido de California", *Migrant Border Ballad Project,* (PhD. Diss. University of Texas, Austin), 110-113

Es muy triste, compañeros, *vivir en estas esferas,* *donde tiene que humillarse* *a las ideas extranjeras.*	*It's very sad, my friends,* *to live under these conditions,* *where you have to humiliate yourself,* *bowing to foreign ideas.*
Hay que salir de este país *toditos a nuestra tierra* *para no prestar lugar* *a que nos echen pa' fuera.*	*We must leave this country,* *all of us back to our land,* *so they won't have a chance* *to throw US out.*
El que compuso estos versos *ése se fue en aeroplano,* *11eva ganas de pisar* *a su suelo mexicano*	*The one who composed these verses,* *left in an airplane,* *he wants to stand* *on Mexican soil.*

In contrast to US society, which turned a blind eye toward the suffering of Mexicans and sought to deport them, Mexico welcomed its patriotic workers back home with open arms. Ortíz's sentiments were widely shared by the consuls, Mexican organizations, and across Mexican and Mexican/American communities in the United States. Throughout the Spanish-language public sphere in the US and Mexico, various public figures in government and the media sought to entice migrants "back home". These messages presented not just negative reasons to leave the US but positive reasons for return, which drew upon ideas of home and offered financial enticements, such as travel fare. These raised migrant expectations of what they would get once they returned to Mexico.

Rhetoric and Reality

In Los Angeles and other cities in the US, the Mexican consuls worked hand in hand with the organizations that most wanted to expel Mexicans from the United States, though they also sought to prevent the forcible expulsion of Mexicans who were employed and legally entitled to be in the US. Likewise, Mexican-American civil society, from *mutalistas* (mutual aid

societies) to the Catholic Church and Spanish language press, also supported repatriation, seeing return to Mexico as the ultimate aim of *México de Afuera*. They organized groups for return and paid the passage for many more people, though exact numbers are unknown. And so the Mexican consuls and civil society, which were the groups best able to resist the American movement to expel Mexicans from the United States, were instead active participants in the same effort.

On the Mexican side, the Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE) and the Departamento de Migración played key roles in the repatriation campaigns of the early 1930s. Consuls kept the Mexican government informed. They reported to Mexican government agents at the border and in Mexico City when to expect new trains and cars of arrivals in border towns, the conditions of the passengers, and whether they needed funds.[13] This sometimes included detailed lists of repatriates, some of which survive in Mexican archives, but these account for only a fraction of the returning flow.[14]

The consulates waged a publicity campaign to encourage people to leave. They played a critical role in keeping the public informed, giving speeches, issuing circulars about the process of repatriation and helping those who needed assistance.[15] They spoke to newspaper and radio reporters about the benefits of repatriation.[16] These campaigns were sometimes coordinated with

[13] For examples see, IV-360-28, IV-354-34, IV-362-49, IV-363-2, IV-352-31, IV-360-14, IV-348-70 Repatriation, Sec de Gob, IV-360-7, IV-354-1, IV-356-31, IV-87-52, IV-187-18, IV-354-1, IV-364-53, IV-107-94, IV-256-1, IV-111-12, IV-360-23, IV-360-30, IV-360-35 Archivo de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores México DF

[14] 4-123-1933-44 Beneficenia Public en el DF Mexico, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

[15] IV-348-64 Circular Num 29, Archivo de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores México DF

[16] IV-107-94 SA Consulate issues CIRCULAR 7, Archivo de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores México DF

local governments and organizations that were conducting repatriation drives but were usually separate efforts. The consuls in every major city supported repatriation, seeing it as the best solution to unemployment and public hostility. Consuls in Los Angeles were not only following pro-repatriation policies from Mexico, they personally believed in the policy and went to great lengths to carry it out. These consulates also organized the issuance of documents, and in some cases represented Mexicans who desired to stay in the United States. As mentioned in Chapter 3, consuls issued thousands of *certificados documentos de recidencia* during the early 1930s to Mexican families who had a legal right to stay in the US to protect them against deportation and other forms of coercion.[17]

Mexican consuls in the US helped or coordinated with organizations that repatriated 91,972 people in 1930, and 115,705 in 1932.[18] Their correspondence with government and non-governmental organizations gives us a window into the chaotic world of mass repatriation. These reports and letters fell into several broad groups. First was the coordination with repatriations already under way. Some of these were with US authorities, others Mexican authorities, or other organizations that facilitated the return of people. The second were organized groups of people who had not yet returned, but desired to do so, and wanted government assistance. The third group were individuals asking for funds, either to go to Mexico, or because they were already at the border and unable to get all the way home.

The Mexican government dealt with dozens of organizations that organized, participated, or encouraged repatriation. Many of these were groups created explicitly to help people return to Mexico, either voluntary or not. Dozens of repatriation organizations sprouted up across the

[17] IV-111-20 Documento de Recidencia, Archivo de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores México DF

[18] Fernando Saúl Alanis Encinos, "Regreso a casa…", p.124.

country, including the *Cooperación Mexicana de Producción, Consumo y Reparación, Comité Pro-Reparación, Comité Local de Caridad, Colonia Unida de Mexicanos*, etc.[19] In other cases, the burden fell on existing *mutalistas* such as *Cruz Azul* and Mexican unions.[20] However, it was the *Comisión Honoríficas* that took on the largest role in promoting and coordinating repatriation drives across the United States. Across Texas, dozens of *Comisiónes* assisted returning Mexicans by communicating with consulates, the SRE, and local charities and governments, raising money to help returning Mexicans, and purchasing tickets for people to return, among other activities.[21]

Many of the organizations that encouraged repatriation were those that had fought for Mexican migrants in the past, including the Immigrant Protective League and Catholic groups, which were discussed in chapters 3 and 4. In Chicago, the Immigrant Protective League along with the consuls and *Comisión Honoríficas* became one of the principle supporters of repatriation for those without jobs.[22] In Colorado, *Comisión Honoríficas* worked with the Committee of Repatriation, which was organized by Thomas Mahony and various Catholic organizations.[23] The Committee of Repatriation was created to assist Mexican migrants when the Great Western Sugar Corporation let go tens of thousands of workers in 1931. Like many people and organizations that had helped migrants throughout the 1920s and 30s, Mahony and the

[19] IV-100-9 Cooperación Mexicana de Producción, IV-349-1 Trabajadores in EEUU, IV-261-41 Comita de Beneficencia y Protection Mutual, IV-350-44 Comite Pro-Repatracion, IV-354-27 Comite Local de Caridad de Douglass, , IV-355-31 Colonia Unida de Mexicanos, Archivo de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores México DF

[20] IV-355-27 Barber Guild of El Paso, IV-349-35 Red Cross of Bisbee, IV-364-51 Sonora Arizona, IV-261-41 Comita de Beneficencia y Protection Mutual, Archivo de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores México DF

[21] For examples see: IV-354-40 Morley 1931, IV-350-20, Comisión Honorifica, of Tulare, IV-109-30 Comisión Honorifica Cook County, IV-354-4 Comisión Honorifica Morely, IV-350-20 Comisión Honorifica Tulare, IV-351-13 Comisión Honorifica Mackay, IV-350-48 Comisión Honorifica Wiley Colorado, IV-350-13 Reparacion, Archivo de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores México DF

[22] IV-350-15 CHICAGO, Archivo de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores México DF

[23] IV-354-40 Morley 1931, Archivo de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores México DF

Comisiónes saw repatriation as the only practical means to aid unemployed and destitute migrants during the Great Depression.

Tens of thousands of families and individuals went back to Mexico on their own accord. Many went back because of a lack of jobs in the US and because they saw going home as a better alternative to their current situation. Others went under duress, under pressure from charities, agencies, and officials, who convinced them it was their best option. Some took advantage of the opportunity to do something they were already planning on doing-- return to Mexico. Many sought to return to their hometowns, and possibly to claim land, which I discuss below. Thousands of these individuals sent letters to the Mexican consulates, the SRE, the Departamento de Migración, or the President of Mexico. In doing so they showed the extent to which they expected the Mexican government to respond to their situation.

Many migrants and families wrote letters to the Mexican government, expressing their desperate circumstances. Jose Rico, who had gone with his extended family to the US in 1928 and returned in 1932 stressed that they had returned to the border town of Nogales Sonora by themselves in order not to tax the Mexican government with expenses, but now that he was unable to find work, and he wished to return to his hometown.[24] Lúis Gonzales Medina and his family had been in the US thirteen years before they arrived at Juarez without funds. He emphasized his illness and inability to work.[25] Trinidad Martinez wrote from Nuevo Laredo that she was a single mother with daughters.[26] Alvardes de Luz y Ortiz and Juana Ortiz de Lopez--

[24] 4-123-1-1932-38 Jose A Rico, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

[25] 4-123-1-1933-41 Luis Gonzales Medina CD Juarez, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

[26] 4-123-1-1933-42 Trinidad Martinez, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

both going to Guanajuato--likewise stressed their status as mothers in asking for funds.[27] María C. Martinez stressed that her husband had become ill in the US in justifying her request for funds to meet him in Chihuahua from Mexico City.[28] The Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores approved funding for all of these people. These were just a tiny sample of the thousands of people who wrote to the Mexican government in these years asking for assistance.[29] While these letters used a gendered language of family poverty, others used a patriotic rhetoric in their appeals for assistance.

In these letters to the government, repatriates fit their appeals to the nationalist rhetoric that was common in the public sphere in general. They often felt a need to justify their original migration as acts that were not unpatriotic. When Melchior Sala Hidalgo migrated, he sent a routine request to the Departamento de Migración but included a personal letter to former President Calles in which he explained that he had been "compelled to abandon my people for the plight in which my family and I find ourselves," that he was a descendent of Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla but that the necessity of providing for his family necessitated his leaving of his country.[30] In his letter, he implicitly addressed the charge of migration as unpatriotic by emphasizing his duty to his family and the dire choices he was presented with. This theme came up again and again in migrant correspondence. Carlos Bastien told the SRE something similar in

[27] Memorandum Dec 21 1933, Delegado de Migracion in Monterrey NL, 4-123-1933-44 Beneficenia Public en el DF Mexico, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

[28] Dec. 5 1933 María C Martinez, 4-123-1933-44 Beneficenia Public en el DF Mexico, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

[29] For samples see. IV-360-7, IV-354-34, IV-354-1, IV-349-1, IV-354-45 Manuel Salgado, I36-16-198 Tomasa Robles de Salcedo, IV-357-30 Francisco N Salcedo, IV-354-17 David Salcedo, IV-3554-44 Toas Salazar, IV-619-4 Srita Collins, IV-357-33 María Ester Reteria, IV-357-15 Luz Rendo de Urias, IV-362-57 Repatriation of Pedor Samano, IV-355-23, Archivo de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores México DF

[30] Translation by Daniel Morales. "A Plutarco Elias Calles," Nov 14 1927, 4-352-1927-190, Melchor Sala Hidalgo, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

explaining why he was asking for documents: “I am an enemy of migration, but today I am left without recourse because of my situation.”[31] Nemesio Peña y Ramo Gòmez, asked for help for himself and his fellow Mexican migrants who were let go from their jobs in Rockdale, Illinois, in favor of white Americans and Europeans. He urged that without help they would resort to crime and dishonorable actions to feed their families.[32] He implied that by helping people repatriate, the Mexican government would not only keep their honor, but that of all Mexicans in the US by keeping them from crime to feed their families.

In explaining to the government exactly why they were deserving of help, migrants explicitly countered public perceptions of the 1920s that they had left the nation on an unpatriotic fool’s errand. They argued that their poverty was the result of the particular circumstances of the Depression and that now the proper role of the government was to help them get them home. [33] They argued that their experience in the United States made them perfect candidates for assistance because they had learned skills that the country needed, or left the country in order to support their families in Mexico and now deserved to do the same in their home country. These migrants were for the most part unfamiliar with the arguments of Manuel Gamio and other elites, but were cognizant of the rhetoric in newspapers and public discourse, and made use of this rhetoric in their statements and letters.

Not everyone received assistance. The Mexican government spent heavily on repatriation but there were simply not enough funds to assist everyone who asked for help. The Secretaria de

[31] Translation by Daniel Morales. Solicita Informes para su emigracion a EUA, 4-352-1929-591, Carlos Bastien, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

[32] IV-354-4 Rockdale IL, Archivo de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores México DF

[33] For examples see: IV-350-14 Repatracion: San Angelo. Tomas Chavarris, Archivo de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores México DF; 4-123-1-1932- 1 to 4-123-1-1932-33 in Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

Relaciones Exteriores and the Departamento de Migración were chronically short of funds for repatriation. While they provided migrants some emergency provisions—mainly in the form of railroad discounts—oftentimes, they denied many any assistance entirely.[34] As a result, thousands of people found themselves stranded along the border or in the interior with no resources.[35] The lack of funds for repatriates was a chronic problem throughout the entire 1930s but was just one of many of the larger problems that the Mexican government had to address with limited resources during the repatriation crisis. Yet, successive federal governments took the public position that it was the duty of every Mexican to return to the homeland and that it was going to promote their return by paying return passages for people and goods alike, suspending taxes for taking goods across the border to encourage the repatriation of capital items, and helping repatriates establish model colonies that would show what could be built by returning migrants. Their return was often marked by happy and joyous public events such as festivals, speeches, and receptions during which Mexican government officials welcomed them back. These events hid a harsh and bitter truth. Years later, Antonio Mendez Lomeli, a Mexican *ejido* organizer, came to believe that the pro-repatriation rhetoric of the Mexican government had encouraged people to return, even in instances when they should have resisted and stayed in the US. Tired of discrimination in the US, they were spurred by the promise of land and the positive embrace that Mexican presidents claimed would welcome them.[36]

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[34] See: IV-100-9, IV-109-84 Repatracion, Micaela Dominguez, Archivo de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores México DF; 4-123-1929-7 Pases a Trabajadores, 4-123-1931-17 Solicitudes de Pasajes NA, 4-123-1-1932- 15 to 4-123-1-1932- 33, 4-123-1929-7 Pases a Trabajadores, 4-123-1931-17 Solicitudes de Pasajes, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

[35] 4-123-1931-17 Solicitudes de Pasajes NA, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF; 4-123-1-1932-27 Jesus Arenas, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

[36] Interview, Antonio Mendez Lomeli, OH 1297, Mexican American Oral History Project, California State University Fullerton, Fullerton California.

Repatriation was a fraught experience for many migrants, made more difficult by the gap between rhetoric and reality. While the government supported a language of repatriation, there were other sources of pressure that made use of this language to claim entitlement to resource from the government as legitimate citizens and objects of government aid. The gap between these claims and the government's ability was perhaps widest when it came to the creation of colonies, new communities organized specifically for repatriates.

The Mexican Colonias

The Mexican press, often adopting newspaper articles and rumors from the Spanish-language press in the US, loudly condemned the treatment of Mexicans and people of Mexican descent by the US government and organizations who had deported or repatriated them to Mexico. The press was also critical of the Mexican government's handling of the crisis, especially of cases in which trainloads of repatriates were being left stranded at the border, and urged the government to devote more money and resources to resettling Mexicans in the interior.[37] In response, Mexican government publicly announced plans for an ambitious project to create new agricultural colonies specifically for repatriated Mexicans. These new colonies were envisioned as models for a new, modern, and progressive Mexico. Creating entire new towns and communities by encouraging outside migration and settlement had a long history going back to colonial Mexico. The *colonias* were meant to expand the reach of Hispanic civilization. Their twentieth-century counterparts were intended to be symbols of capitalist modernity.

[37] Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 167.

In the United States, the dozens of repatriation *mutalistas* that sprang up to work with consuls and local officials to coordinate the return of Mexicans, also took a major role in efforts to resettle those repatriates. Many of these organizations carried out plans to create agricultural colonies of returnees that had been developed in the 1920s, often by members who had always dreamed of returning to own their own land in their home state. However, with the onset of Depression, most were in no condition to put these plans into action, and thus called on the help of the Mexican state. Many worked with consuls in the US as well as the SRE and state officials in coordinating these plans, and asked for funds to repatriate to Mexico and settle in colonies.

Organizations drew on the modernist and patriotic vision that the government promoted to promote their plans for colonies to the government. Luis Vera, president of a colony organization, argued that by assisting members of his organization in returning, they would use their skills in improving the land and bring modern agriculture to Mexico. Meanwhile, Rosalinoo Araiza, another organizer, highlighted the ways the people in his group continued being part of the Mexican body politic outside of the country through devotion to Mexico.[38] With names like *Comité Pro-Repatriación, Vanguardia de Colonización Proletaria*, organizations claimed both that they could improve the nation and that they were entitled to help. The latter claimed to be able to raise millions of dollars while the former claimed far more members than they actually had.[39] Other organizations were just as ambitious: *Grupo Nacional Mexicano* had designs to purchase a massive hacienda in Chihuahua that fell apart after it was learned the land was both useless for agriculture and contested between different parties. Many of these plans involved land in Baja California. In one case, hundreds of families were defrauded in a land swap scheme

[38] Repatriation Petition, May 15 1931, IV-353-38, and Repatriation Petition Oct 5 1932, IV-341-39, Archivo de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores México DF, relatad in Balderrama and Rodríguez, Decade of Betrayal, 189-193.

[39] Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 199-200.

that took migrants' titles to property in the US. In another case, the plans fell though after a land survey showed many competing land claims.[40] The governor of Veracruz offered twenty-four hundred acres for sale at one hundred pesos per acre in Orizaba to returning migrants but this did not lead to new colonies.[41]

The government established the National Repatriation Committee (NRC) to oversee the broad swath of repatriation efforts in Mexico. The executive committee was drawn from prominent government ministers and quickly settled upon the idea of repatriation colonies as its primary focus. Manuel Gamio had recommended the establishment of *colonias* in the belief that separate colonies of repatriates could establish model societies based on modern farming and social practices, without being weighed down by conservative rural society. Despite its publicity work, the NRC was not well suited for the task. In theory, repatriates would be placed on unused lands that would be sold to them on favorable terms, as well as water, tools, animals and the like. Loans and land titles would be structured in a way that promoted repayment and financial independence for the farmers. However, Rafael Gonzalez, of the League of Workers and Farm Laborers "complained that the government's assistance was irregular and insufficient. Farm machinery, tools, and equipment as well as mules critically needed for cultivation never arrived. Disgruntled repatriates often threatened the use of force to achieve their objectives and promote their interests. Colonization agent Manuel Chávez remarked that "the life of a repatriate only cost 25 pesos."[42]

[40] Interview, Antonio Mendez Lomeli, August 24 1972, OH 1297, Mexican American Oral History Project, California State University Fullerton, Fullerton CA.

[41] Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 214.

[42] Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 176-177

When the committee was replaced by the National Repatriation Board in 1934, it redoubled its colonization efforts with the support of the newly elected President, Lázaro Cárdenas and the federal government. Colonization was a small aspect of Cárdenas's land reform agenda, which was the largest in the nation's history. As millions of acres of land were redistributed across the nation, haciendas finally lost their dominant position in the rural economy and millions of people gained either *ejido* communal land rights or access to private parcels of land. The president, like Gamio, believed returning Mexicans had skills that would help the rural economy.[43] Even so, the *Banco Nacional de Crédito Ejidal* was not interested in funding these colonies and it was not until the late 1930s that funding for *colonias* was in place. Although there was a large population of destitute repatriates in Mexico, the Mexican government came to think that only middle-class skilled workers would make successful colonists and turned to the US to recruit new repatriates for the *colonias*.

In 1939, Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores Ramón Beteta toured the United States to recruit repatriates for *colonias.*[44] He and the Mexican government had hoped for the repatriation of up to half a million Mexicans for new *colonias*. These hopes were fed by enthusiastic organizations, and while many people spoke to him, only a few hundred families were willing to take up the offer. Most of those who were in a position to repatriate, had already done so by 1933, very few left in later years. Those that remained in the United States had made it through the worst of the depression, were often legal residents, and had stable employment or government relief. While many were interested in repatriation in the abstract, they were for the most part settled in the US and not willing to leave.

[43] Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 179

[44] 55957 Repatriation of Mexican Nationals, INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

The government concentrated its efforts on a single colony, *18 de Marzo*.[45] Named after the date of President Cárdenas' nationalization of the oil industry, the colony was meant to be a model community to show that the government could in fact offer returning Mexicans a new start and a way forward for the nation as a whole. The government spent 13,819,268 *pesos* establishing the community, by far the most spent on a colony in the repatriation period. Approximately 4,000 individuals comprising 627 families settled in the colony, and the community grew to 5,000 over a few years. However, things did not work out as intended. The colony was delayed, its location was changed, and at one point colonists went on strike over conditions in the colony. Conditions were so difficult in the first years that repatriated families depended on remittances from the US, and many migrated back to work in Texas in order to raise enough money to support the enterprise, showing their commitment,[46] yet many left within a few years.[47] The colony managed to survive and by the 1940s formed the core of the Tamaulipas cotton district that boomed in the 1950s. Casey Walsh has noted that, with enough investment, especially in water controls, and a favorable international situation, at least a few colonies were able to grow into prosperous towns in this period.[48] Notwithstanding, the region did not act as a permanent settlement for large numbers of repatriates. By the 1950s, most of the

[45] Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 178-185.

[46] Walsh, *Building the Borderlands*, 135-153.

[47] Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso, *El Valle Bajo Del Río Bravo, Tamaulipas, En La Década de 1930 : El Desarrollo Regional En La Posrevolución a Partir de La Irrigación, La Migración Interna Y Los Repatriados de Estados Unidos* (Ciudad Victoria, Tam. : El Colegio de Tamaulipas ;, 2003).

[48] Casey Walsh, *Building the Borderlands: A Transnational History of Irrigated Cotton along the Mexico-Texas Border* (Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 135-153.

cotton was picked by migrant farmworkers who were on their way to the US, reinforcing the economy of migrant labor rather than acting as a bulwark against it. [49]

In his examinations of repatriation colonies in the Mexican north, especially in Tamaulipas and San Luis Potosí and including *18 de Marzo,* Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso has shown how repatriation colonies failed at nearly every stage of the process, from conception to recruiting to implantation. Through it all, as pro-repatriation views took hold throughout the government during the Cárdenas administration, very few questioned how the promises of presidents would be carried out. The Mexican Consul in Detroit was one of the few in the US to object to the recruiting of new repatriates to move to colonies, but the most serious objections came from those tasked with implementing the policy in Gobernación, who historian Saul Alanís quotes as mildly stating that it would be better if "*que se queden allá*."[50]

In her examination of several colonization projects in Guanajuato, Georgina Escoto Molina came to the same conclusion as Alanis, that colonies lacked the resources needed to succeed. Despite the overtures and appeals made to Mexicans in the US to participate in the *colonias* the government provided little more than information about lands and prices. When individuals applied to the state's colonization program, only those who did not need any assistance were accepted, and the one major government-sponsored effort to build a colony survived only with significant investment, but did not lead to greater resettlement of repatriates.[51]

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[49] Walsh, *Building the Borderland*, 154-173.

[50] *Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso, Que se queden allá: el gobierno de México y la repatriación de mexicanos en Estados Unidos (1934-1940*) (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 2007).

[51] Georgina Escoto Molina, "Migrantes guanajuantenses y las repatriaciones de 1929-1935" (MA Tesis. Escuela Nacional de Antropologia E Historia, 2010), 45-56.

While some colonies survived, the overall plan to settle repatriates in colonies as a basis for building a modernized Mexico failed. Funds regularly ran out long before any project got off the ground. The last major repatriation program for colonies in 1939 ran out of funds in just two months.[52] Dozens of colonies were established in nearly every state. Some like *El Centinela* were four million acres while others were only a few hundred acres. Either way, despite the central effort and construction of irrigation projects, in almost every instance the endeavor was a failure. Colonists and their families were left to farm lands with few resources and with too many restrictions on loans and land. The Mexicans who settled in colonies drifted away to other places, either to their home towns or across Mexico in search of opportunities. In 1929, *Secretaria de Agricultura y Fomento* agent Marte R. Gómez went to Los Angeles to make tool purchases for new *ejidos* (communal land redistribution). While there, he said to groups of potential repatriates that the state of Tamaulipas was prepared to offer twenty hectares to returning Mexicans.[53] More than any coloniy plan, offers like this, for land in *ejidos* or their own plots among the rest of the rural population, spurred the return of tens of thousands of families.

Returning with Little or Nothing

The vast majority of returnees did not settle in the colonies. Instead, they went to places that they knew in their home regions, or to cities. Mexico was not spared from the hardships of the Great Depression. The government estimated that in the cities, there were nearly 90,000 unemployed people. This figure included 14,000 in Mexico City, 10,000 in the state of

[52] By the mid-1930s, the US Government openly questioned whether repatriation colonies existed at all. Letters, April 17 1936, October 26 1937, December 1937, Bureau of Immigration, 55957 INS RG 85, NARA, Washington D.C.

[53] Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 198.

Zacatecas, and 7,000 in the state of Jalisco, three of the primary destinations for returning migrants according to *La Prensa*.[54] The Mexican government's hopes that people would return with skills and capital were soon dashed. While some did arrive with a large quantity of goods, and even a few with capital, most arrived with their few worldly possessions, a few consumer goods, and with empty stomachs.

As migrants returned home or settled in new places they had to make do with what they brought with them. Part of Manuel Gamio's and the Mexican government's motivation in promoting return migration was the belief that those who had been in the US would contribute resources that Mexico's economy desperately needed. Returnees were thought to possess new skills, democratic beliefs, and most importantly, capital that would help industrialize agricultural production. Accounts of the period and the records of the SRE and Departamento de Migración suggest that the reality was at best mixed. Some returnees had funds and plans but others did not; some had materials such as food, luggage and goods, while others had only the clothes on their backs. The Mexican government expanded its duty exemptions for returning migrants, allowing them to bring more goods back as long as they filed the paperwork. Tens of thousands of people took advantage of this, and letters from across the US made inquiries to the government regarding the details of policies for taking things back. Some people and families came back with cars full of goods, and in other cases, repatriate groups organized the sending of large quantities of goods across the border.[55] However, when looking at the items that people actually returned with, a very different priority is seen. Returnees rarely brought back tractors or modern machinery; more often, they brought back consumer goods like sewing machines, radios, records

[54] September 9, 1930, *La Prensa*, from Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 250.

[55] For example, see, IV-130-7, IV-348-73 Laredo Texas, IV-354-40 Morley 1931, Archivo de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores México DF

and record players, and automobiles. While these goods were not what the government had in mind, they made a profound difference for the individual families that took the effort to repatriate these items to Mexico.

The Mexican government hoped that returning men and women would be able to repatriate with capital. There were some reasons to be optimistic. K. Higson, a banker in Los Angeles, estimated that Mexicans in California had withdrawn seven million dollars cumulatively in 1931, though most accounts were rather more modest. *El Universal* estimated that Mexicans repatriated twenty million dollars' worth of cash and property, while Balderrama put his own estimate at twice that.[56] Manuel Télles, *Secretaria de Gobernacion*, encouraged state governors to create employment programs, especially for skilled workers who had acquired skills in the US that the government hoped would improve the economy. At various points the government hoped to use repatriates in large infrastructure projects but no specific ones were created. Instead, when the government did create large projects, jobs went to local union members instead. As a result, many skilled repatriates joined the Union of Mexican Repatriates, and demanded that the government and National Repatriation Committee spend more and initiate more projects.[57] While skilled repatriates in urban centers wanted jobs from the government, the Mexican government hoped that their skills and capital could be put to productive use without expense. For the most part, not enough people returned with enough capital to make a meaningful difference to the economy of the country or any particular region.

For the part, returnees brought back consumer goods and household items. Large numbers of women petitioned the SRE for certificates of residence for their sewing machines,

[56] El Universal, April 28, 1932; in Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 241.

[57] Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 250-252.

more than any other household objects.[58] These sewing machines greatly cut the workload of women in a world where most clothing was still homemade and women were expected to do all the domestic work.

It was common for returning migrants to travel in cars to the border. These were often families who had intended to settle permanently in the US, but also included a few men migrants and those who had always intended to come back to Mexico. Their cars were filled with all the possessions a family could possibly fit. One extended family of nine members drove from Colorado to Chihuahua in a 1926 Chevrolet with "100 pounds of beans, a gas stove, a sewing machine, and 200 pounds of flour."[59] Enrique Vega's family had saved enough to take a truck with all their belongings back to Zacatecas. His father bought a ranch and horses with money he has saved working in the US and started a new life, though his children who had grown up in the US instead of Mexico had mixed feelings about settling down permanently in their new home.[60] Another man drove two Ford trucks from the US, and used them to start a business hauling animals and produce to market, "Now I own a house and two trucks; it makes me a living. I was a laborer here, and never could have bought trucks (with my wages) here."[61] In Guanajuato, similar scenes played out, Isidro López, Elías Calderón and Luis Sandoval joined together to bring various automobiles to Silao, where they established a chauffeuring/trucking business. In

[58] IV-70-7-1 Protección a Mexicanos del Ano 1930, Anastasio Pérez, Secretara de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F.; also mentioned in Balderrama and Rodríguez, Decade of Betrayal, 140.

[59] Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 128.

[60] Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 246.

[61] Taylor, *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community*, 62.

Péjamo, the town plaza was full of cars people had brought back and repatriates dominated the agricultural trucking business.[62]

Repatriation to the Cities

Despite efforts to steer people to rural areas, returning Mexicans, especially skilled workers and small businessmen, went to urban centers in large numbers. Fifteen percent of all repatriates went to cities, including Mexico City, Monterrey, Guadalajara, Torreón, San Luis Potosí and more. Local businesses became concerned about the infusion of competition, but there was not much that could be done. For repatriates, accustomed to the cash economy of the US, urban spaces in Mexico represented their best option.[63] One man and his family who had been working in Chicago for a steel company returned in 1931 with a car and too making machines to start a new life, but the car broke down in San Luis Potosí. He abandoned the car there but managed to get his machinery to his hometown, where he used it start a new business.[64] Similarly, many small businessmen took the tools of their trades with them. "Barbers, repairmen, plumbers, tailors, leather workers, musicians, carpenters, mechanics, and other journeymen insisted on taking their equipment with them in hopes of being able to reestablish themselves in Mexico."[65] This was particularly true of migrants from urban centers and those from the Midwest, whose experience in factory and skill trades allowed them to create new small

[62] James Gilbert, "A Field Study in Mexico of Mexican Repatriation Movement" (PhD. Diss., University of Southern California, 1934), 50-53.

[63] Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 248.

[64] Taylor, *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community*, 69.

[65] Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*. 140

businesses and remain better off than when they had left Mexico years before. These people were the exception, however.

Most had not worked in skilled trades in the US nor accumulated capital. For them, returning to urban Mexico was much more difficult. Even skilled workers encountered opposition, the Junta Federal de Concilacíon y Arbitraje were against the hiring of repatriates in large government projects because they provided new competition that reduced their own hours. Mexicans and Mexican-Americans who returned to urban centers fared particularly poorly in an urban economy that was going through the Depression. Newspapers articles and local officials expressed concern about this massive influx of people to urban centers. The majority of repatriates were not skilled workers but migratory laborers, and the Departamento de Migración estimated that a quarter of returning Mexicans arrived at the border without any resources.[66] In border towns and in large urban centers, thousands of migrants who had nowhere else to go lived in poor conditions. In *El Universal* and other newspapers, reports of large numbers of these repatriates in Mexico City began to appear, and *Excésior* urged repatriated people to organize and present their situation to the Secretaria de Gobernación.[67] Mexico City established soup kitchens and other emergency aid services for returnees. In Monterrey, a well-off women's group paid railroad fares for some families.[68]

While border towns were accustomed to temporary waves of deported and destitute migrants, the repatriation crisis was on a whole other scale. The border town of Tijuana in particular was completely overwhelmed by the number of people returning from California,

[66] Consul Foster to Department of State, Jan 27, 1931, Piedras Negras, RG 59, 812.5511/105, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC

[67] Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 241.

[68] Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 247.

especially Los Angeles. Beyond the crisis, many repatriates ended up settling in border towns, growing Tijuana and Mexicali in the process.[69] Lomeli described to *La Opinion* how chaotic the repatriation effort was along the border. In Mexicali, Mexican Departamento de Migración and railway agents locked people in trains, threatened them with arrest for crimes, beat them, and otherwise took advantage of them. The border area was likewise full of hucksters and risks for returning repatriates.[70]

Thousands of people had returned to Mexico expecting to be able to make money in urban centers like Torreón, Monterrey, or Mexico City but instead found themselves destitute. These people often appealed to the government for help getting to their hometowns but were no longer eligible for funds.[71] Laureano Garcia and her children were left without recourse after being repatriated, and failing to make a living in Monterrey, without work and food, she asked for help going to Tampico.[72] In his letter to President Pascual Ortiz Rubio, Anastasio Arriaga requested assistance in getting himself and his family to Guadalajara, explaining that the consul in Dallas had arranged for their repatriation but that he and his family ran out of funds and were stranded in Monterrey. There, they struggled, and despite describing their starvation and plight, were denied assistance.[73] Ramon Garcia, in his letter to the President, said that "instead of choosing as a residence, a place he knew, he decided to live in this city (Zacatecas), where I have

[69] Years later many of these border residents would become transnational residents, crossing to work in the US every day. In the 1940s and 1950s both towns would provide housing to Braceros and undocumented migrant workers who crossed daily into the US to work.

[70] Interview, Antonio Mendez Lomeli, OH 1297, Mexican American Oral History Project, California State University Fullerton, Fullerton California.

[71] 4-123-1-1932- 1 to 4-123-1-1932-33 in Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

[72] 4-123-1932-28 Laueano Garcia, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

[73] 4-123-1-1932-30 Anastasio Arriaga to Don Pascual Ortiz Rubio, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF. (Translation Daniel Morales)

exhausted all of my resources" and was now asking for help for his family of nine. They were also rejected.[74]

Even when aid was forthcoming, it did not always end well. In a series of correspondence with the *Secretaria de Gobernación*, Daniel Martinez explained, "me and my mother are repatriated, and came to this city [Monterrey], with scarce resources, and without a home where to stay." They were given tickets to Torreón where he had a sister and aunt, only to arrive and find that they had died and "our presence has served to increase the number of the unemployed who have gathered in this population, waiting for help that federal authorities have promised."[75] Such stories were too common in these years, as the Mexican government did not have the funds to help those in distress and could at best get people home and hope that their families and local communities could have enough to support returning repatriates. It was often not the case.

[74] 4-123-1-1932-31 Ramon Garcia, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF. (Translation Daniel Morales)

[75] 4-352-1929-565 Daniel E. Martinez Pide Informes sobre entrada a EEUU, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF. (Translation Daniel Morales)

Map 6.1. Map of Central Mexico, with Brownsville, Monterrey, Torreon, Zacatecas, San Luis Potosi, Aguascalientes, Guanajuato, Leon, Celaya, Guadalajara, Morelia, and Mexico City shown. [Map by author, created March 21, 2016]

Repatriates in Rural Mexico: Adjusting to Rural Life

The vast majority of repatriates returned to their states or region of origin. Tens of thousands returned to Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán, San Luis Potosí, and the northern states of Sonora, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Nuevo Leon, and Zacatecas. They primarily went to the communities they had once been part of, but they also brought with them children who had never grown up there or had left at such a young age that they did not remember them. In going to their home regions, repatriates relied on their social networks, their hometowns, and their families. Some bought land, others worked on *haciendas*, and others acquired *ejido* land. While there was some upward mobility among those with capital, the majority of the people founds in Mexico in chapter 2 in 1930 were doing rural labor, the same job they did before they went to the US. The same holds true of the repatriates. Although most of the adults settled into their home communities, the second generation found the transition much more difficult. Some adjusted and stayed, but many others left, migrating back north to the US. In examining stories of rural return, it is clear that pathways continued to be shaped by their social networks.

Antonio Mendez Lomeli, a professor in an agricultural school in Chihuahua when the repatriation started and an advocate of land reform, was put in charge of government efforts to organize *ejidos* in different parts of the country. His account of the repatriation is one of the few we have from those who tasked with implementing the Mexican government's policies of return. At Urepetiro, Michoacán, many repatriated families lost the precious capital they had brought with them. One family's truck broke down on its way south and had to be sold. Many families took to working on haciendas for a short time on their way south in order to accumulate funds to continue their journey. In the same town, the repatriates used engines to power water wells and built an electric lighting system for a school, and did other improvements to the town. Lomeli

considered repatriates a progressive influence in the villages where many villagers sought to keep the hierarchies and agricultural practices of the past. He saw them as ambitious and much less willing to accept the power of haciendas in the area. Some of the families he helped resettled like Cristobal and Juan Escorsa and David Perez and others ended up staying as farmers there.[76]

Most repatriated Mexican migrants returned to a life similar to that which they had before they migrated to the US. Some reported having misspent their earnings in the US, or were forced to leave items like cars behind when they repatriated. As one person put it, "Our business is *agricultor*, before and after." [77] This confirms the findings of the migration study, discussed in chapter 2, that the vast majority of people in Mexico wrote down that they were farm laborers in 1930, regardless of the job they had held in the US, they returned to agriculture once back in Mexico.

Some repatriated families made use of the language, social connections and farming skills they had learned in the US to create stable lives in Mexico. Returning repatriates became independent farmers in Baja, making use of their knowledge of American farming techniques to plant new crops and to sell to markets.[78] For Fernando Pérez and his family, circular migration was a pathway to a better life in Mexico. His father worked in the US and his family lived in Pittsburg, California before returning to Encarnación, Jalisco, where his father's savings allowed him to buy a farm. He wanted to be a farmer and had saved for years in order to be able to return, so when repatriation offered a chance to return at Mexico governments' expense, he took it.[79]

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[76] Interview, Antonio Mendez Lomeli, OH 1297, Mexican American Oral History Project, California State University Fullerton, Fullerton California.

[77] Taylor, *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community*, 59.

[78] Interview, Antonio Mendez Lomeli, OH 1297, Mexican American Oral History Project, California State University Fullerton, Fullerton California.

[79] Balderrama and Rodríguez, Decade of Betrayal, 279.

Likewise Ramona Ríos de Castro and her family settled in Ejido Erienda in San Ysidro, Baja after being repatriated US. Her ability to speak English enabled the family to establish a fishing business for American visitors to Baja.[80]

About half of the total number of people who "repatriated" were children who accompanied their parents. Some had been born in Mexico, but many more had been born in the United States. About 40% of repatriates were US citizens, indicating the American birth of these children. For many of them, Mexico was a foreign land with which they had no experience. In their stories, it becomes clear that for them, *el retorno* did not mean back to Mexico, but instead the desire to go back to the United States. While there is significant data on where people were going when they repatriated, there has only been a very limited amount of research into what happened to people, especially those children, over time. There is a small sample from Guanajuato, which I will speak about. Unfortunately, most of the surviving accounts of repatriation from the view of children are from those that eventually migrated back to the United States. This results in a skewed and unrepresentative view of what happened to people over time, as it leaves out the large numbers of people who never did migrate north again but instead settled down in Guanajuato. Nevertheless, the accounts show the process of return to have been difficult on a personal level for many, whether or not they chose to go back north in later years.

The process of adjustment to rural life was difficult for returning families, especially children who had grown up in the US and may have never known Mexico. Differences in material conditions compounded by cultural, language, and religious differences posed numerous adjustment challenges. Women in particular had a difficult time adjusting to the more patriarchal conservative expectations of family members in Mexico.

[80] Balderrama and Rodríguez, Decade of Betrayal, 274.

Hortencia Martinez de Benitez, told Cristine Valenciana about her family's experience in repatriation. They took the train from LA to Juarez and from there to "la villa" with no roads, at the insistence of family members who encouraged their return. They moved in with her aunt. However, her father became ill and the family was forced to sell most of the belongings they had brought back to Mexico. They resettled on a farm after being unable to find work in town. There, her father became a rural farmer of beans and rice in order to feed his fifteen children. Benitez struggled to adjust to rural life, with no reliable streets or access to running water, and having to go to town to do any shopping. Her father was only able to send her children to their first three years of school there.[81]

The family of Francisco Castañeda had similar difficulties of adjustment. His mother was from San Luis Potosi and his father Durango, who had come to the US with uncles and other family members. His father worked as a miner and an uncle as a carpenter. The family did well until the depression when the father was unable to get a job for many years and the mother was the sole breadwinner, working as a servant. After the family went to LA County charities for help, they decided to repatriate, though it is unclear if this was coerced or not. The family returned to Mexico in 1937, much later in the Depression and after the peak wave of repatriation. The returned by train to the father's hometown of Palacio, Durango, and eventually settled on a farm. There, his mother died and he and his US-born siblings worked on the farm growing corn from a young age, and later picked cotton.[82] Likewise, Castañeda Valenciana and her family did not have much when they arrived in Mexico and moved to a rural ranch with only six other

[81] Interview, Hortencia Martinez de Benitez, OH 1298, Mexican American Oral History Project, California State University Fullerton, Fullerton CA.

[82] Interview, Francisco Castaneda, OH 1301, Mexican American Oral History Project, California State University Fullerton, Fullerton California.

inhabitants. There, they had to start a far different life from the one she knew in California as a child.[83] The children struggled in the local schools, but eventually learned fluent Spanish and adjusted to life in Durango.

For some repatriated children, arriving into a new world was a traumatic experience. Gregorio Gonzalez and his wife Juana Carmona repatriated from Pennsylvania, taking the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad to Laredo before taking the Mexican National Railway to Tarimoro, Guanajuato. They returned with their belongings and a mixed status family comprising of one child born in Mexico and eight more in the US. The American-born children struggled to adjust to their new lives in Mexico which they saw as a foreign country.[84] One migrant who had returned with his parents to Penjamo, Guanajuato from the Midwest was pessimistic about the situation he faced in Mexico, remarking, "I can't understand how many of these people live here. There's no industry, nothing but agriculture. And that's no good- no irrigation, just raising corn once a year."[85]

The family of Mariana Gonzalez faced a difficult choice in 1931 of whether to return or stay. The Gonzalez family has crossed into the United States during the revolution and was mentioned in chapter four when the father, Feliz became a miner in Miami, Arizona. Since then Feliz had taken a job with the Santa Fe Railroad and worked his way to Santa Ana, California where he settled the family.[86] His wife, María de la Cruz, by then had two US-born daughters, Lupe and Mariana. When the Depression hit, Feliz, the only wage earner, found himself out of a

[83] Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 242.

[84] Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 239

[85] James C. Gilbert, "A Field Study in Mexico of the Mexican Repatriation Movement," (Master's Thesis, University of Southern California, 1934), 37.

[86] Feliz Gonzales, María Gonzales, Lupe Gonzales, Mariana Gonzales, 1930 US Censes

job. He, like many others, were caught up in the repatriation drives of Southern California. And he decided it would be best to return to their hometown in La Barca, Jalisco to join his parents and relatives. However, their daughters did not want to go, especially Lupe, who was 16 (Mariana was 11) at the time and in a relationship with a boy who lived further north in LA County.[87] Lupe convinced her parents to let her stay. And so the two sisters separated to live different lives in different countries. Lupe stayed, married, and settled in El Monte, California.[88]

Mariana went with her parents to live in rural Jalisco. At La Barca, Feliz had imagined that his family could settle permanently, but things did not go as planned. There, Feliz and María de la Cruz were unable to secure their own land and instead worked as farm laborers (*peones*) on an apricot hacienda. After a few years, Feliz became ill and died, leaving María to take care of Mariana. Their lack of resources probably contributed to Mariana's marriage at a young age to Fermin Morales, an artisan metal worker who made gear for the lively *charro* scene in Jalisco. There in La Barca, she gave birth to three children and seemed to have settled down permanently. However, she quietly, and sometimes not so quietly, voiced her desire to return to the US, insisting to anyone who would listen that she was an American and should never have been repatriated to Mexico.[89]

The experiences of repatriates and their Mexican-American children varied widely. Yet a study of families that returned to Guanajuato showed that most people eventually adjusted to life in these communities and could be found living in them as husbands, wives, and parents in the 1940s and 50s. Making use of repatriation rolls, Molina searched for people in local parish

[87] Birth Certificates, Lupe Gonzales, Mariana Gonzales, Morales Family Papers

[88] Interview of Felipe Morales on Mariana Gonzalez, Jan. 4 1916, Azusa California

[89] Interview of Felipe Morales on Mariana Gonzalez, Jan. 4 1916, Azusa California

records. She found that of those families that returned, most had children under 15, which may have indicated that older children stayed in the US. Most returning families likewise returned in groups with other families from the same region, which suggests that people were living with those that they knew in the United States and relied on these same networks in order to return to Mexico. After some time, while many did not stay in their hometowns, they stayed in their general vicinity. Of the about 172 of these children returnees found in records, eighty were women. The majority eventually married locally. Most of the men also married people from the area, but many also went to the United States after some time, in keeping with a general pattern of men marrying locally in the 1920s and working in the US, even when they rarely returned. These findings suggest that even when adjustment was difficult, many of them were able to make the transition, but it also suggests the enduring migration patterns that led many others back to migration.[90]

The Second Generation Finding Ways Back North

During an era when most scholars have emphasized the lack of migration, the second generation showed the extent to which migrant networks found ways to adjust to life in a new place and they often used established migration networks to do so. The second generation children, including US citizens, used the resources at their disposal--information, legal status, and language skills--in order to forge new forms of transnational migration. Many of the people who were repatriated in the early 1930s eventually found their way back to the United States and participated in continued circular migration in the late 1930s or more commonly, in the 1940s.

[90] Georgina Escoto Molina, "Migrantes guanajuantenses y las repatriaciones de 1929-1935" (MA Tesis. Escuela Nacional de Antropologia E Historia, 2010), 58-82.

The migration decisions made by the Vega family are a good example of the different choices families faced and represents the decision many made to return to the US. The father, mother, children and grandfather had moved from Jalisco to southern California during the Revolution. By the 1930s, several family members had been born on the US side. Lauro remembers that "even when we were born here they (The US government) wanted to send us all to Mexico… they made a propaganda… said that the people who want to volunteer to go to Mexico, they will [pay] everything, transportation free, and there will be free land and all that." He, like many others when asked about deportation, said that they were not forced, "ah no, they all volunteered".[91] The family joined the repatriates but in the end some of them decided to stay while others left for Tijuana. Lauro explains, "I knew my wife there, she was a little girl when she went. My brother, my brother in law, they were all born [in the US] but they went to Mexico and they stayed about ten years later they came back [to the US] … My mother-in-law went to Tijuana… My wife and her family/sisters stayed here with an uncle on this side while they waited for their mother… But all them people, they went up there and they suffered." Vega then relates a story of one of his friends, Tony Aguilar, who was about to join a repatriate ship, when he was told that the promises were a lie and he got off the boat at the last minute.[92] Early enthusiasm for repatriation soon turned into cynicism and most of the family members returned to the Los Angeles area within a few years.

Like many people in the second generation that had been born in the US and accompanied their parents to Mexico, Hortencia Martinez de Benitez lived in Mexico until she became an adult, at which point she moved back to the US. But that was not the case for

[91] Interview, Vega Lauro, VOCES Oral History 113, Benson Library, University of Texas Austin, Austin Texas.

[92] Interview, Vega Lauro, VOCES Oral History 113, Benson Library, University of Texas Austin, Austin Texas.

everyone in her large family of fifteen siblings. Some of them went back to the US to work and sent back money to Mexico while others migrated back to the US. Others got married in Mexico and settled there permanently. She also mentioned that several other repatriated families in the town settled in Mexico permanently.[93] But Enrique Vega decided he wanted his own children to grow up in the US. As he told a researcher, "if I had to do it over again, I would have stayed [in the US]." He arranged for papers to go back with his family and returned himself within six weeks.[94] In the case of some families, circumstances pushed them back into a life of migration. Several years after repatriating with his family Arturo Herrada became ill, and his father decided to return to work in Detroit despite the ongoing depression, in order to send money back so that the family could survive.[95]

By the 1940s, Mariana desired to go north to join her sister, with whom she kept in regular contact, despite her husband's desire to stay in La Barca, Jalisco. With the economy booming during World War II, she decided she would join her sister. But this proved more difficult than she had imagined. She was unable to secure papers for her husband and children. Instead, following the advice of another relative, she settled the family in Tijuana until an opportunity arose to take the family across the border with or without documents, an opportunity that did not arrive until 1960. For two decades, Mariana, fluent in two languages, crossed daily into the US at San Ysidro to work as a house cleaner in San Diego while raising nine children in Mexico. Her US citizenship afforded her the relative freedom of movement that most migrants lacked at the border. As the primary wage earner, her income allowed her children to live a

[93] Interview, Hortencia Martinez de Benitez, OH 1298, Mexican American Oral History Project, California State University Fullerton, Fullerton CA.

[94] Balderrama and Rodríguez, Decade of Betrayal, 257.

[95] Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 247.

middle class life in Tijuana even as Fermin's business struggled in a city without many working *charros*. Most of her children eventually crossed the US border without documents and she moved north to East Los Angeles, and then Azusa, just down the street from her sister, who by now had a large family of her own.[96]

The Venegas family was in a stable economic position in Los Angeles at the start of the Depression, but their desire to return to Mexico meant that they eventually joined the waves of repatriates. As mentioned in chapter 5, Miguel and Dolores Venegas were grocery store owners who had fled the Cristero war in Jalisco. When the Depression hit, the grocery store had difficulty staying in business and Miguel saw an opportunity to return home. In letters to his brother in Jalisco, he describes his desire to repatriate, the financial pressures on the family, and asks about the possibility to return.[97] In 1932 Miguel returned to Zapotlanejo after the death of cacique Rosario Orozco, however he came to the conclusion that conditions were worse there than in the US. He did not give up on his dream, however, and in 1938 moved the whole family to Guadalajara, where he established a glass shop alongside his brother's store.[98]

As a consequence of these recurring moves, many of these families developed deep ties to both countries and had children born on both sides of the border. Those who returned and those who stayed in the US kept in contact with each other through time and space and many eventually sought to rebuild those links and even turn them into an advantage. When Miguel and Dolores Venegas moved to Guadalajara, Jalisco to establish their store, they left behind some

[96] Interview, Felipe Morales, Jan. 4 1916, Azusa California

[97] 1931, 1932 Letters, María Teresa Venegas, *Letters Home: Mexican Exile Correspondence from Los Angeles, 1927-1932* ([The Author], 2012), 95-121.

[98] María Teresa Venegas, *Letters Home: Mexican Exile Correspondence from Los Angeles, 1927-1932* ([The Author], 2012), 1-24

family members in the US. Their oldest son stayed behind to manage the grocery store. The other children were in for a cultural shock. Their parents had cultivated a utopian Jalisco in their imaginations, with farms, horses, family and culture that they frequently expressed in their own letters desiring to go back to Mexico, and were not prepared for the realities of Mexican life. Miguel struggled to support his family with his glass business. Meanwhile, with World War II expanding the economy, the store in Los Angeles was doing well, and the family arranged to once again move back to the US in 1942.[99]

Many of those who repatriated in the early 1930s found the path to return legally blocked. During the repatriation campaigns, authorities in government and organizations repeatedly told people that if they repatriated voluntarily they would be able to return at a future date. This was not true. Having accepted help from private or government agencies, they had received charity and were excluded from legal entry on grounds that they were liable to become a public charge. In many cases, families decided to migrate without documents. The Castañeda family, who were mentioned earlier in this chapter, fit this mold. Like other second-generation migrants, Francisco Castañeda and her siblings eventually returned to the US. In their case, it was the women who missed the relative social freedom of the US compared to the patriarchal family life they had in Mexico and most wanted to return US. However, they had not secured the proper papers to prove that they had been born on the northern side of the border before they left. As a result, they were denied entry into the US. In the late 1940s, various members of the family began to cross without

[99] María Teresa Venegas, Letters Home: Mexican Exile Correspondence from Los Angeles, 1927-1932 ([The Author], 2012),

documents. Francisco crossed in 1951 and funded the journeys of other family members in following years.[100]

These accounts show the extent to which some transnational families, and by extension communities, stayed in contact throughout the depression years. While repatriation has been painted as a rupture--as a time when people went back to communities they did not know or understand—and although they left behind one world for another, the two worlds were never completely separate. People kept in contact with those back in Mexico, as I explored in the last chapter, and most preferred to return to communities they had been part of rather than go to places unknown. The Great Depression also did not destroy the links to the US or circular migration as much as scholars have thought. People kept in contact, and already by the mid-1930s, some amount of migration resumed. These links expanded in the 1940s with the continuation of large-scale migration, and endured into the post-war era.

Migrants and Land Reform in Rural Mexico

Returning migrants returned to a Mexico undergoing a social, economic and political transformation. Despite a new constitution in 1917, a relatively stable government after 1920, and official peace agreement with the Cristeros in 1929, many of the root causes underlying the violence of the revolution remained. Violence from local uprisings, Cristero groups, and bandits continued to be a problem into the early 1930s, especially in the highlands of central Mexico. Most importantly, however, the problem of land ownership and redistribution remained unresolved in large parts of the country. After and during the revolution, haciendas were attacked

[100] Interview, Francisco Castaneda, OH 1301, Mexican American Oral History Project, California State University Fullerton, Fullerton California.

and the land redistributed in many places, and the 1917 Constitution reestablished the right to communal lands. In the 1920s, the government of Calles had codified many of these land acquisitions that had already taken place but generally limited new distributions. In the late 1920s, Calles, no longer president but still the most powerful man in Mexico, became concerned with development and the productivity of land. This led him and President Rodriguez to promote small private ownership rather than collective property. However, a cadre of governors strongly supported redistribution and *ejidos*. These included Cedillo in San Luis Potosí and Cárdenas in Michoacán, among others. Supported by *agraristas*, armed militias made up of people who had or wanted land, these governors continued to dismantle haciendas.

Many returnees sought to buy land and many more joined *agraristas* and other political groups pushing for land reform. As such, many returnees entered what was already a tense political situation. In central Mexico, returning migrants faced a standoff between *Cristeros* who were generally opposed to land reform, and *agraristas*. In her study of the agrarian movement in Jalisco, Ann Craig was surprised to find that many of the more active supporters of land redistribution were those who had been in the US and were returning in the early 1930s. While returning migrants were rarely leaders, they formed a strong contingent supporting land reform. Commenting on the struggle by the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios* (SOV) to grow unto a larger movement in the early 1930s, Craig notes that "*Laguenses* returning from the US provided the manpower for the agrarian reform efforts of the SOV."[101] She found, for example, that the *ejido de Paso de Cuarenta* "urged prompt resolution of a conflict over the land grant to that community, because many men had returned from the US and were hoping to dedicate

[101] Ann L. Craig, *First Agraristas: An Oral History of a Mexican Agrarian Reform Movement*, (Berkeley: Univ of California Pr, 1983), 92-93.

themselves to agriculture," and that many petitions referred to unemployment and landlessness among those who had returned from the US as reasons *ejidos* were urgently needed.[102]

Ernesto Rodriguez was a barber before going to the US in 1922 with a friend, and became a barber in a Mexican community in Ohio. Once there, he participated in union activity and read *La Prensa*. He returned to Mexico in 1930 and joined his brother who was "a revolutionary" and joined the SOV in 1932. He credited his union experience as the reason he joined the *agraristas*.[103] Cipriano Barbosa left for the US in 1918, when his older brother sent him $30 to join him in the US. There, he worked in fourteen different states, and returned to Mexico at the end of 1930. He credited seeing the difference between the two societies for his involvement in the *ejido* movement. "The large landowners, what they wanted was to have people enslaved. To have them work for nothing, and to be hungry. Lots of people claimed that if the poor laborer were hungry, he would work more. But in the US one learned that a man with a full stomach … works willingly if he is paid for his work."[104] Jon Oliva's family returned to Mexico in 1932 after fifteen years in the US. While in the US he had learned about agrarian reform from other migrants from Guanajuato and joined the movement when he arrived back home.[105]

In seeking to explain why returning migrants were disproportionally represented in the agrarian movement, Craig pointed to demographic and ideological factors. First, few were *peons acasillados* (workers who lived and worked on a plantation, completely dependent on the

[102] Ibid, 93. (Expedientes ejidales, ASRA)

[103] Craig, *First Agraristas*, 189-193.

[104] Craig, *First Agraristas*, 203.

[105] Craig, *First Agraristas*, 202-203

landowner). Rather, most had been sharecroppers, mule drivers, seasonal laborers, or even involved in small-scale commerce before their migration to the US. Most were in their twenties but had families, and "all of them went with friends or relatives or went to meet someone they know who was already living in the US." In other words, they were similar to the migrants in the census study discussed in Chapter 2.[106] But she also noted that the experience of migration itself made them stand out in their community. Local leaders told her they specifically recruited migrants, knowing they would be the most enthusiastic. As one migrant put it, "Here they have always paid really miserable, very low wages, and so those of US who were accustomed to earning more money there (in the US) and another life, well, how could we come back here to work the same way?"[107] Migrants had also liberalized their views on a wide variety of issues while in the US, from religion to support for unions, and many had become much more educated.[108]

Molina found a similar pattern among migrants in Guanajuato. In a close study of several towns in Guanajuato, she shows that returning migrants primarily went back to their home regions, though not necessarily their hometowns. There, many joined agrarian movements already in place. Victor Hernández from Romita GTO, migrated to Chicago in the 1920s, where he became involved in efforts to create a Mexican union there, and even went to Mexico as a delegate of Chicago for the *Casa del Obrero Mundial*. He returned to Mexico at the start of the Depression. His wife Natividad supported their children through running a grocery store and he joined the local agrarian movement. By 1932 Hernandez had become president of the *Comité*

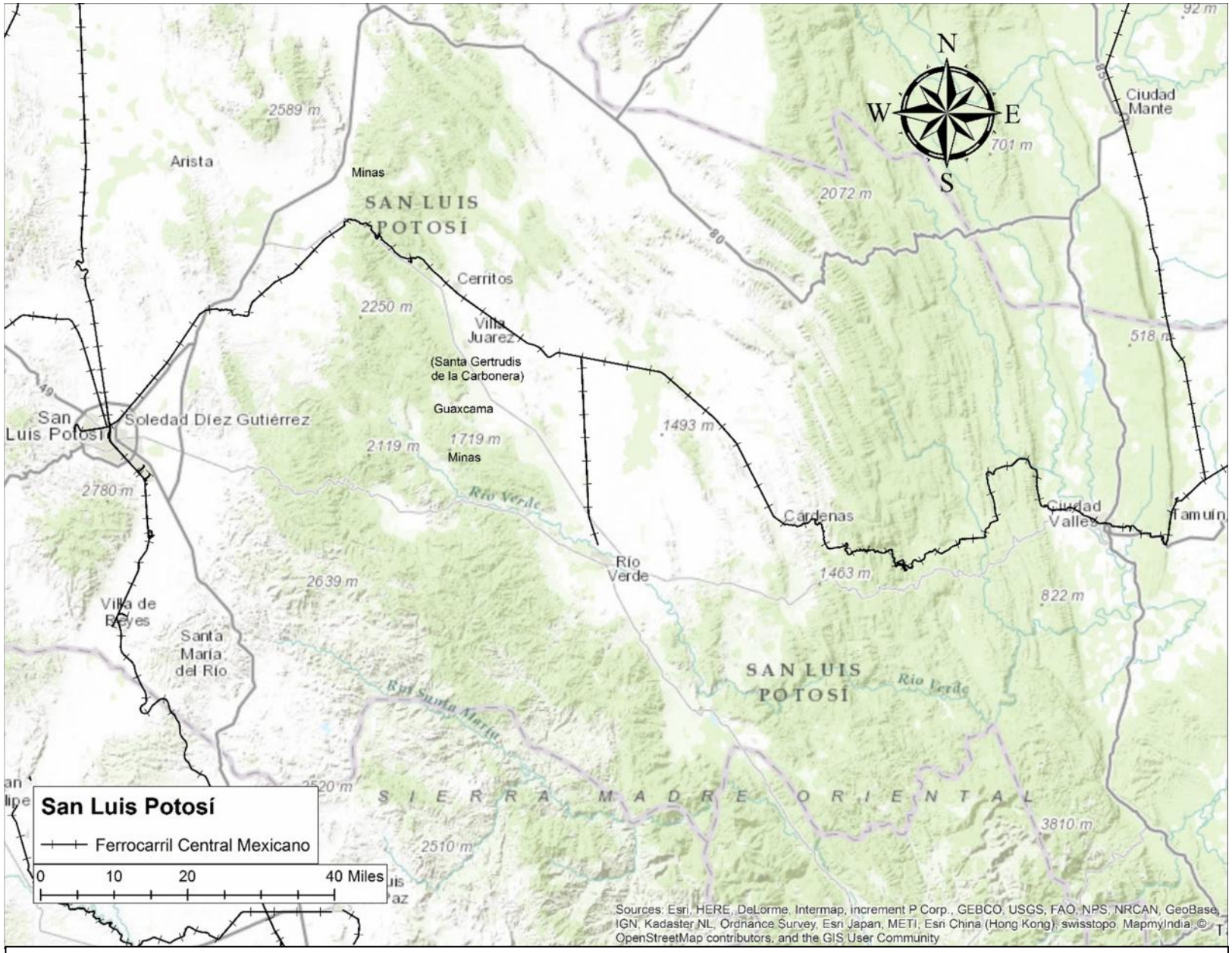
[106] Craig, First Agraristas, 178-180.

[107] Ibid 180.

[108] Ibid 181.

Particular Ejecutivo Agrario de Silao, and oversaw establishment of *ejidos* throughout the area for several decades, this despite the fact that Guanajuato was not a major site of *ejido* land redistribution in general. In a similar fashion, Primo Tapia came back to Michoacán from Los Angeles where he had been a *Partido Liberal Méxicano* (PLM) supporter and member of the International Workers of the World (IWW) before he joined the agrarian movement upon his return in the 1930s.[109]

[109] Georgina Escoto Molina, "Migrantes guanajuantenses y las repatriaciones de 1929-1935" (MA Tesis. Escuela Nacional de Antropologia E Historia, 2010), 82-90.



Map 6.2. Map of central San Luis Potosí, with the locations of San Luis Potosí, Cerritos, Santa Gertrudis, Guaxcama, Rio Verde, Cardenas, Ciudad Valles, and Tamuín marked in between. San Luis Potosí Railroad Map [Map by author, created October 8th, 2015]

The relatively small population of San Luis Potosí did not produce the large numbers of migrants that the *bajío* states of Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán did, but the effect of migration was no less felt. The state was not a site of the *Cristero* war in the way that Guanajuato and Jalisco were. In fact, *agrasist*as from the state that fought the *Cristeros* even as the state became a haven for conservative Catholics during the violence. San Luis Potosí did, however, experience violence in the Cedillo's revolt against Cardenás in the 1930s. Migration here was more straightforwardly economically driven though by no means less tied into local social and communal structures. During the Depression, tens of thousands of people returned to San Luis Potosí, back to the Media Zona and the small towns in the valley. Continuing from the 1920s into the 1930s, a mixed economy arose despite the land redistribution, where families farmed land while sending members north to the US in order to bring back much needed income. This mixed migrant-agrarian economy became a critical component of life in this area.

Most families returned to their hometowns and, as in Jalisco and Guanajuato, participated in land redistribution as members of their communities. When the repatriation drives started, the governor of San Luis Potosi offered land to settle one thousand families on farms, and land for five hundred destitute families.[110] Many large groups of migrants sought not only return assistance but land. In 1933, forty men repatriating to Rio Verde, San Luis Potosí, sought not only to return but land to cultivate.[111]

The 1920s and 1930s in central San Luis Potosí was a time of land redistribution. Following the revolution, the breaking up of large haciendas was much more vigorous and thorough than in most of Mexico. At Guxcama, while many of the buildings lay in ruins, the

[110] Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 214.

[111] 4-123-1933-44 Beneficenia Public en el DF Mexico, Memorandum Dec 9 1933, Instituto Nacional de Migración, Archivo Migratorio Central, México DF.

hacienda as a unit of production continued to exist but it was unclear who had claim to the land. In 1929, the hacendados told the local families living on the land that they were selling the land to them, but their sale was false, meant to give the impression of a sale while keeping ultimate legal control. In 1935, during the Cárdenas administration, the families who lived on the land brought their claim to the *Comisíon Agraria*, which finally broke it into communal land (*ejidos*) for the workers, though use of the water from the aqueduct remained contested and all claims were not settled until the 1940s.[112] To the northeast, the great Agostura hacienda was divided much earlier, in the early 1920s, and the surrounding towns were granted *ejido* land. At Bosques y Caldera outside of Cerritos, the townspeople acquired legal claim to parts of the hacienda in 1925, and so did many more people across the valley.[113] In 1927, the state government split the county of Cerritos in half, keeping Cerritos as the county seat in the north, and renaming the former Santa Gertrudis de la Carbonera a more patriotic name- Villa Juárez- and making it the county seat in the south. The main train station, however, continued to be at Cerritos, and people from around the area continued to use it as the main gateway to the US. Yet, starting in the late 1920s and increasing in the 1930s, droughts made it difficult for families to stay on the land without any other source of income as the region became increasingly dry.[114]

[112] Dotacion, Poblacion Guxcama, Villa Juárez, San Luis Potosí, Mexico, 23/21221, Archivo del Registro Agrario, México DF.

[113] Dotacion, Bosques Y Caldera, Cerritos, San Luis Potosí, Mexico, 23/11967, Archivo del Registro Agrario, México DF.

[114] Its posible this is an early example of climate change. People interviewed in Cerritos and Villa Juarez often made this claim, as does Ramón Alejandro Montoya, "El Cura y Los Braceros," in *La Emigración de San Luis Potosí a Estados Unidos Pasado y Presente*, ed. Fernando Saúl Alanis Enciso (El Colegio de San Luis, 2001), 77-78.

By the early 1930s, pressure to address the agrarian issue mounted. Thousands of local groups were organizing and even arming themselves to pressure the government into action. The focus of this organizing was the 1934 election, during which agrarian organizations pressured the *Partido Nacional Revolucionario* (PNR) into adopting a leftist platform and nominating Lázaro Cárdenas for the presidency. Having been left out of previous agrarian reforms, former migrants flocked to these organizations in disproportionate numbers in central Mexico. After his election, Cárdenas outmaneuvered Calles, forcing him into exile, and instituted large-scale agrarian reform. In six years, more than forty million acres of land were redistributed to *ejido* communities. Most of these lands did not go to returning migrants, however; they were just a small fraction of the hundreds of thousands who sought land in these years. Yet it is precisely their invisibility in this movement that illustrates the extent to which returning migrants had become integrated into the politics of Mexico. Most migrants did not go to colonies, or lobby for land as migrants, but as Mexican citizens rooted in their communities.

Continuing Migration in the Late 1930s and 1940s.

Land reform was not enough to end migration, at least not in central Mexico. The redistribution of six million acres of land during the Cárdenas administration ended the rural violence that had continued since the Mexican Revolution, broke the power of large landholders and established the PRI's vision of a nationalist cooperative capitalism as the predominant political and economic model of the country. In the years after land redistribution, the Mexican economy grew at a fast pace until the 1960's. However, it did not alter the basic conditions that made people migrate, especially the high levels of poverty in the countryside, which persisted

despite land redistribution because a limit of land kept individual claims small and crop yields while larger than before the revolution remained limited.[115] Starting in the late-1930s, but especially after the start of the Bracero Program in 1942, people in central Mexico began to migrate again in large numbers.

In Cerritos, San Luis Potosí, migration became engrained in local traditions. The Catholic Church throughout the 1920s had taken a strong stance against migration, arguing that migrants gained vices and dangerous ideas through migration that turned them against Christian morals and the Church. Migration was seen as eroding the family, leading men to abandon their responsibilities and reject settling down. Yet after years of warning against migration to no effect, some clergymen began to take a difference stance. Roberto Murrieta Montoya became the priest of Cerritos in 1937, and he began to use his position to shape migration, welcoming migrants but also acting as a broker. He used this role to promote traditional values among migrants, making sure migrants acted within family and church structures. This role expanded significantly in the 1940s when he became one of the primary conduits through which braceros in Cerritos and Villa Juarez got contracts. He decided who went as braceros, choosing men with families and in good standing in the Church.[116]

Isabel Monroy Castillo's research using marriage records from several Catholic parishes across the state of San Luis Potosí and Illinois shows the prevalence of migration among people from San Luis Potosí. She found that at the Saint Francis of Assisi Parish in Chicago, several of the marriages between 1930 and 1935 involved people from San Luis Potosí, although they mostly wed migrants who hailed from nearby states. She used these findings to show that a

[115] Mexico's post World War II large scale increase in crop yields, known as the Green Revolution, did not extend to the *ejido* and small land holder class.

[116] Ibid 75-94

community of migrants from San Luis Potosí was settling in the city, and within that parish in particular. More importantly, she searched the marriage records of three San Luis counties for marriages of men who had at one point been to the US. She found that of people getting married in the period before 1935, the rates at which a person had spent time in the US varied from as low as 1% to as high at 55.4%. Which suggests that even in San Luis Potosí, which places participated in migration varied greatly, with some areas having deep migrant networks and others not. In one town, of the 274 registered persons, 152 had been to the US, their locations were as varied as California, Texas, Illinois, Louisiana, Colorado, and New York. Most people had been in the US from one to five years and often migrated back and forth multiple times.[117] From these records, it appears that many young men in the state (and some women) saw migration not as an act of leaving a community but of expanding it. They used the resources of the migrant community--experience, information, and capital--in order to migrate themselves. People went to the US in order to make money so that they could return, to raise money perhaps for a wedding, or land, or a home. In doing so, they expanded the range and scope of where people from that region lived and worked to include a transnational conception of community and family.

Valente Benavides Rendon went back and forth between Mexico and the United States repeatedly for more than a decade. A small landholder in Nuevo Laredo Valente, Rendon sent remittances that his wife Regina used to support their twelve children. He worked as far as north as Chicago and Wisconsin, but when the Depression began in 1930, he took advantage of the Mexican government's program to repatriate to Mexico. Without his remittance earnings

[117] Isabel Monroy Castillo, "Los Rastros de una Migración Antigua," in *La Emigración de San Luis Potosí a Estados Unidos Pasado y Presente,* ed. Fernando Saúl Alanis Enciso (El Colegio de San Luis, 2001), 13-40

however, the family began to suffer. He also did not enjoy farm work in Mexico. So in 1934, at the height of the Depression and while repatriation drives were still occurring, Valente decided to hire a coyote to smuggle him and his sons, across the border. The family lived "*la vida de inmigrantes*" as traveling farmworkers across the United States from California to Louisiana depending on the season and wages for several years until Valente was arrested for being undocumented some years later. He told his son Reynaldo, "If they throw me to Mexico I will come back one way or another." The Benavides Randon family eventually settled in the US in the 1940s.[118]

When Ramón Sánchez and his family found it difficult to readapt to life in San Julian, Jalisco, they decided to return to the US but he was denied legal entry even though ten of his children had been born in the US. The family languished in Juarez as they appealed their case and the youngest daughter died of malnutrition. Frustrated, Mr. Sánchez "borrowed money to buy a secondhand suit, shaved off his mustache, and relying on his fair skin and green eyes, he simply walked across the border." He later paid a *coyote* to transport the rest of his family.[119]

Eventually, even Lomneli, the *ejido* organizer who had spent so much time helping repatriating families adjust to life in Mexico decided to go north in 1938. By then, he had been moved to Nuevo Leon, where he organized a new *ejido* before moving on to another, usually in very remote areas. Then he moved on to Michoacán, where as a jefe de zona, he distributed

[118] Interview, Rendon, Reynaldo Benavides, VOCES Oral History 436, Benson Library, University of Texas Austin, Austin Texas.

[119] Balderrama and Rodríguez, Decade of Betrayal, 258-259.

government funds. Yet he left the work and came into the US by paying a coyote, and then brought his family to the US, where he worked in Orange County, California.[120]

Building on long experience in the 1910s, 20s, and 30s, communities in central Mexico continued to disproportionately participate in circular migration despite large scale land redistribution. While some of these new migrants did not have access to their own land, many did. It became common for families to have one son work the land while another participated in migrant labor and sent back remittances. These actions eventually brought about a mixed economy where people would work *ejido* land while holding other jobs, maybe in the reopened mines and railroads, or having relatives move to urban centers in Mexico, and increasingly used migration as a means to supplement an agricultural livelihood.

Conclusion

The resumption of migration in the late 1930s and especially in the 1940s is not surprising when considered in the context of migrants' lives and the choices they faced. During the Depression, Mexicans living and working in the US primarily repatriated to their home regions. In doing so, they relied on the town-based networks that had helped them migrate in the first place--on relatives and acquaintances, on a social world of organizations and churches that helped people make new lives, become involved in agrarian politics, set up businesses, find ways to live at the border, and migrate yet again. It is also not surprising that migration would resume in the late 1930s and 1940s in light of the fact that at least 40% of the people who "returned" were American-born children of Mexican migrants, for whom *home* was in the United States.

[120] Interview, Antonio Mendez Lomeli, OH 1297, Mexican American Oral History Project, California State University Fullerton, Fullerton California.

When migrants left—and whether they were leaving the US or Mexico—they maintained links to their relatives and friends, to organizations they had worked with, to places they were familiar with. These links survived the Great Depression and served as a support network and infrastructure for the migration that took off again in the 1940s with the commencement of the Bracero Program.

The Great Depression is usually thought of as having ended the first era of mass Mexican migration and destroyed communities, as people were sent to Mexico and white "Okies" took over much of the farm work in California. But even at the height of these developments, Mexicans still made up a majority of field workers in California, in the beet fields of the Midwest, and the cotton and winter-garden fields of Texas. Along the Rio Grande Valley, repatriation was a much smaller-scale event than in the rest of the country, and the cross-border seasonal migration of cotton field workers continued, though on a smaller scale. Migrants, especially of the second generation, were returning in smaller numbers to California, Texas, and Illinois when the World War II economy started to draw a whole new generation of migrants.

The migrant economy survived the Depression and continued to shape people's lives in the 1940s and beyond. The structural limits of the rural economy meant that it was often better to migrate, or go to the rapidly expanding Mexican cities, than to stay. The economic logics that sent people north had never completely ceased to operate. In the late 1930s and 1940s Mexicans again went north and sent money back to support small land holdings and farms that their families now held. They continued strategies that had started in the 1920s and earlier.

When the United States entered World War II, millions of Americans joined the armed forces, and all of a sudden, hundreds of thousands of Mexicans were needed in the fields and factories. Reformers and governments on both sides of the border saw an opportunity to realize

long-sought reforms in Mexican migration--especially labor security for employers and minimal protections for workers. And so the two governments negotiated an accord for what became known as the Bracero Program, which placed the process of recruiting, transporting, paying, taking care of, and returning Mexican workers into government hands. A new generation of migrants in the 1940s used the Bracero Program to the same ends as migrants had before them, expanding the areas and the numbers of people who participated in the mixed migrant-agricultural economy.

Epilogue

The Bracero Program and the Political Economy of Migrant Labor

The entry of the United States into World War II, and with it the growth of the wartime economy and armed forces quickly led to labor shortages and calls to renew the policies established during the first world war, which allowed for the temporary migration of Mexican laborers under contract. This led to the creation of the largest bilateral labor program in U.S. and Mexican history, the Mexican Farm Labor Agreement, signed in August 1942, commonly known as the Bracero Program. It implemented long-sought changes to Mexican migration by both the U.S. and Mexico: control by both federal governments, guaranteed labor for employers, and some minimal protections for workers. In carrying out the program on the Mexican side, federal officials relied heavily on state and local officials and communities in organizing the program. The program formalized and provided state sanction for the political economy of migrant labor between the two countries, while allowing a border to be drawn more sharply between the two countries by distinguishing between "legal" migration (that is, migration organized by the bracero program) and "illegal" or undocumented and unregulated labor migration.

The desire for a controlled labor program has a long history that stretches decades before the start of World War II. The bilateral program was the culmination of decades of efforts by intellectuals, government officials, and agriculture interests. Since the early 1900s, the immigration bureau has been suggesting and improvising immigration exceptions and looking for ways to formalize the recruiting and hiring of workers at the border.[1] On the Mexican side,

[1] In an early example. Porfirio Diaz and William Taft came to an agreement to send Mexicans under contract to hoe sugar beets in the Midwest shortly before the Mexican Revolution.

Manuel Gamio, along with many of the researchers, charities, and migrant-helping organizations in the U.S. had long believed in a formalized labor program as a way to avoid most of the abuses that befell workers, and Gamio himself was involved in the design of the World War II program.[2] In 1929, Secretaria de Relaciones minister Estrada sought to make a formal labor arrangement with the U.S. government, as did consul Santibañez.[3] All of these efforts failed as long as Mexico retained little leverage and American growers felt no need to deviate from their practice of informal recruitment. The war changed this dynamic.

Despite fears that the program would hurt migrants or cause flight from agricultural fields in Northern Mexico, Mexican officials believed it would be beneficial to Mexican society and pushed for it as part of a larger set of agreements between the two governments that covered debt, oil, and wartime investment. From 1942 to its end in 1964 some 4.6 million Mexicans participated in the Bracero Program. Created just in time for the 1942 sugar beet harvest, its workers originally worked in sugar beets, cotton, fruits, and other agricultural industries. Later, the program was opened to railroad workers. These were the same industries that in the previous three decades had come to depend on ethnic Mexican laborers but had suffered disruption during the Depression.

In San Luis Potosí, state and local interests aligned to support the Bracero Program, especially among railroad workers. After the creation of the Bracero Program, the Southern Pacific and the Santa Fe railroads lobbied the United States government to add railroad workers to the agreement, and in its second year during 1943, the program began to recruit railroad

[2] Manuel García y Griego, "The Importation of Mexican Contract Laborers to the United States, 1942-1964." Gutiérrez, David Gregory. *Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1996, 51.

[3] Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States*, 117.

workers from Mexico. By 1945, 65,000 Mexicans worked across the United States as railroad section labor workers.[4] Governor Gonzalo N. Santos, who had put down the Cedillo rebellion several years previously, was interested in obtaining bracero contracts for his state, particularly for the many unemployed railroad workers. He saw the program as a way to alleviate unemployment in his state at little cost and put the experience of many of former migrants to use. After lobbying the government, a secondary recruiting center was established at the state capital, which was a major rail hub.[5]

The braceros from San Luis Potosí were understood to be going for many of the same reasons as did an earlier generation of migrants. *El Heraldo*, a newspaper in the state, said that many workers expected to make a lot of money going north, "They go with the desire to obtain enough money to 'build a future' for themselves and their families. Emigrating to work in order to provide your family 'those pressing needs that have been denied to them,' they leave 'full of faith' and hope that they will improve their living conditions."[6] Alanis also found that many went north because of a lack of land or low agricultural productivity in states that experienced droughts. Others went to find opportunities. For example, one worker quit his work at ASARCO in Mexico (see Chapter 4) to go work as a bracero; some signed up in order to find adventure.

[4] Manuel García y Griego, "The Importation of Mexican Contract Laborers to the United States, 1942-1964." Gutiérrez, David Gregory. *Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1996, 51.

[5] Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso and Carlos Alberto Roque Puente, *Nos vamos al traque: la contratación de braceros ferroviarios en el ámbito regional durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial : el caso de San Luis Potosí, 1944* (San Luis Potosí: Colegio de San Luis, 2007), 1-42.

[6] [Translation by Daniel Morales], *El Heraldo*, 7 y 28 de abril de 1944, in Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso and Carlos Alberto Roque Puente, *Nos vamos al traque: la contratación de braceros ferroviarios en el ámbito regional durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial: el caso de San Luis Potosí, 1944* (San Luis Potosí: Colegio de San Luis, 2007), 59.

Regardless of different motivations, the bracero program operated along the same local and transnational migrant networks that had been established in the preceding decades. As mentioned in the last chapter, in Cerritos as in other places, local officials, and even church officials acted as important brokers, choosing who received and did not receive a bracero contracts. Fr. Roberto Murrieta Montoya used his position to encourage moral behavior, giving contracts to those with families and good standing with the belief that this would increase the chances that men would return with money saved and would not abandon their communities.[7] As time went on, this new migration grew to a more massive scale and became increasingly difficult to control. By the end of the war, undocumented migration from San Luis Potosí matched the number that went north with bracero contracts. This was not an isolated phenomenon but characterized the Bracero Program across Mexico.

Echoing earlier rhetoric on migration, President Avila Camacho and the Mexican government believed that working in the U.S. would advance rural Mexico socially and technologically. In a confidential letter to municipal presidents in Jalisco, Michoacán, Sonora, Veracruz and Zacatecas, Camacho used the language of civilizational uplift to enlist their help in recruiting and organizing the program across rural/central Mexico.[8] Towns had to set targets for recruitment, and the government encouraged local officials to recruit men with families, as they were thought to be less likely to skip out on the program than single men and become undocumented workers.

[7] Ramón Alejandro Montoya, "El Cura y Los Braceros," in *La Emigración de San Luis Potosí a Estados Unidos Pasado y Presente*, ed. Fernando Saúl Alanis Enciso (El Colegio de San Luis, 2001).

[8] Manuel Avila Camacho to town presidents in Jalisco, August 9, 1942, Governmental Correspondence, 1940-1950, Archivo Municipal, San Martin de Hidalgo, Jalisco, Mexico. In Rosas, *Abrazando el Espiritu*, 19.

The migration patterns under the Bracero program in San Luis Potosi were evident elsewhere. Ana Rosas found in the town of San Martin de Hidalgo in Jalisco that the program depended on the organizational efforts of communities, families, and especially women to function. There, the municipal president, Gabino Preciado, purposely drew on community resources to help organize the migrants. Middle class residents were encouraged to participate, and many of them did, and more importantly, they were encouraged to lend money to working class residents who wanted to participate but could not afford the fees and costs. Women worked back home, took care of families, and ran businesses and the finances of the community organizational efforts. Braceros and their families also drew on the experience of former migrants and repatriates, participated in community meetings. These repatriates cautioned against being too optimistic about working in the U.S., which entailed discrimination, hardships, and practical considerations such as saving money and avoiding bad behaviors. They warned migrants that transitioning from being braceros into long term settlement back home with their families was difficult, and that "careful planning would be necessary for dealing with family separation, increased debt, and tense ethnic, gender, face, and class relations."[9] Ex-migrant, Manuel Ricardo Roses, as the administrator of the San Martin de Hidalgo bracero program, facilitated agreements and loans, wrote letters of recommendation, but also offered advice about journeying and working north.[10] In doing so he showed the ways this community harnessed the resources at its disposal, the experience of former migrants, in order to carry out the new Bracero Program.

[9] Rosas, *Abrazando el Espiritu*, 28.

[10] Rosas, *Abrazando el Espiritu*, 31.

The Bracero program marked a new era of Mexican migration, and a shift in the relationships between migrants and the Mexican and U.S. governments. The mechanisms of labor migration became firmly placed in the hands of the U.S. and Mexican states. Yet, the practical organization of the program at the local level and the realities of migration outside the official channels show that migration remained a social phenomenon dependent on interpersonal networks. From the early 1940s to 1968, Mexico's economy grew by 3 to 4 percent per year, lifting millions out of poverty, as the country industrialized and pursued import substitution. Yet, the golden age of Mexico's economic miracle went hand in hand with the permanence of migration as part of the social system in central Mexico. There was never a time when Mexico's economy was strong enough to dissuade people from migrating. It has always sent people to the north. During the Bracero Program, government officials became increasingly willing to bow to US demands that sacrificed workers' working conditions to keep the program going. Officials within the government and critics alike associated continuing migration with the limits of the land reform program.[11] In other words, the causes and contours of migration in the postwar era retained many of the same characteristics that defined migration throughout the first four decades of the twentieth century.

The Bracero Program ended an earlier era when migration was almost entirely organized by market forces and social organization, in which the Mexican state played a much smaller role. Mass migration in the early twentieth century was impelled by the industrialization of northern Mexico and the American West, and was shaped by the violence of the Mexican Revolution and the Cristero War. But, as this dissertation has sought to show, contours of mass migration, the

[11] González Navaro, *Poblacion y sociedad*, 154-56; in Manuel García y Griego, "The Importation of Mexican Contract Laborers to the United States, 1942-1964." Gutiérrez, David Gregory. Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States. Rowman & Littlefield, 1996, 64.

way it worked on the ground, was a social process, not a state organized or regulated one. Throughout the early and mid-20th century, town-based interpersonal networks formed the engine that propelled and sustained large-scale migration. They provided the information, capital, and transportation that migrants needed in order to move. What is perhaps most remarkable about the Bracero Program was the extent to which it relied on these town-based networks to operate on the local level. Municipal presidents, parish priests, and hometown associations chose who went and funded migrants. It was because of the strong ties of migrants to their communities that even when migration became initiated and organized by government, bureaucracies, migrants continued to come disproportionately from the same towns in central Mexico that had sent migrants in previous periods and that continued to send migrants for the remainder of the twentieth century.

Mexican Migration in the Twentieth Century

Why did people migrate? Migrants needed to raise enough money to make the journey, survive obstacles on the road that ranged from bribes to violence, and face the extremely dangerous and increasingly difficult task of crossing the border. They were also often exploited and discriminated against once in the United States. Why would anyone assume these risks? This was a question that frequently came to me while reading the literature of Chicano history. Expecting to hear stories of broken dreams, I often asked migrants and family members of migrants in Mexico and the United States why they had gone north. Many had migrated during the bracero era, though many had family members who had come around the time of the revolution. When I asked if they knew about their family members' motivations, most people

being interviewed saw migrating as both a necessary escape from poverty and violence and as an opportunity to earn more.

Migrants and family members of migrants from before the Bracero Program told stories that highlighted common themes: the Mexican Revolution, railroads, Cristeros, mining, cotton, sugar beets; but also, nearly all of them had a destination and someone they knew already in the U.S. They described how their families came to join uncles, cousins, brothers, fathers in places like Miami, Arizona, El Monte, California, San Antonio, Texas, and Chicago, Illinois. In studying the places where migration became deeply engrained in the local culture, in Guanajuato and San Luis Potosí, it is easy to see the paths created by early migrants. As migrants went north, they sent back information and remittances, and when they returned they brought back consumer goods and experience. This experience, combined with money raised from others in the community, created conditions that made it easier for others to go north. It was precisely these networks of people and information that helped migrants mitigate and navigate the risks of migrating. This set of reinforcing logics made up the migrant economy, a transnational economy that affected migrant sending areas just as much as the Mexican-American communities in the U.S. and sustained transnational ties through families.

Mexicans left their homes in search of jobs or to escape violence, but how they did it, where they went, where they kept going were highly dependent on their particular positions within the larger economy of migrant labor. As my census study shows, railroad workers were the most mobile and least likely to stay in a job for long. Cotton and beet workers also moved regularly, with the exception of cotton workers in the Rio Grande Valley. Regional migratory circuits developed in California, Texas, Arizona, and the Midwest, but these regional circuits also shared a great deal of overlap with each other, with workers moving from region to region

and industry to industry with regularity. The railroad, steel, and meat packing industries drew Mexican migrants to Chicago, where large urban communities developed even as most migrants did not stay in the city very long. This kind of dynamic growth could even happen at the level of a particular firm. Most importantly, the census study showed that Mexican and Mexican-American communities in the U.S. were anchored by a stable minority, made up of skilled workers who worked in factories, as tailors, small businessmen, grocery store owners, pool hall owners, boardinghouse owners, and in some places teachers and newspapermen. These were a middle-class --the men and women who made up most *mutalistas,* the Church, and charity organizations--whose livelihoods were tied to the more migratory community around them. Circular migration could not have functioned without brokers and service providers, who acted as the critical link between new arrivals and older communities and institutions. They helped migrants acquire housing and jobs, redress wrongs, and negotiate a foreign world as much as the direct links back home did. Migrants turned to the social world around them in the United States just as much as in Mexico to migrate and to achieve their goals.

During the repatriation drives of the Great Depression, people turned to the same networks to survive. As the US and Mexican governments, and most of the religious and social institutions in both countries saw repatriation as the answer to the Depression, Mexican and Mexican-American suffered discrimination, families were torn apart, people deported, and people returned on a journey that only began upon reaching Mexico. Rather than going to colonies or urban centers, most returning migrants went to their home communities, in small towns and rural Mexico. There, they relied again on their networks, and through them, joined political and agrarian movements. For their children, adjustment was difficult but possible, with many staying but many others turning once again to migration. The Bracero Program, a

government-run temporary migration effort, came to rely on these same local networks to operate, and operated in conjunction with undocumented migration throughout the 1940s.

Ricardo Villalobos told an unusual story to researchers at University of Texas El Paso. His father was born in the United States at Rockdale, Illinois. His grandfather was a migrant and railroad worker at the time. During the Great Depression, the family was deported (repatriated) to Mexico, including his American-born citizen father. However, like many others, the father was unable to prove that he had been born in the United States. As a result, he later returned to the United States the only way he knew how, as a Mexican bracero. He worked in a variety of jobs as a Mexican migrant before settling in the U.S.[12] The walls that separate the borderlands have made such stories commonplace. Efforts to build the nation-state, especially on the U.S. side, have created a scar across a land once open. Such efforts began in the late 19th century but took on a new urgency during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), during which the U.S. twice intervened militarily. During the 1920s, the U.S. closed its door to Asian and European migration, established a border patrol, but maintained a way to import cheap disposable labor deprived of rights from Mexico. The border walls and border patrol was only the most visible part of a large enforcement regime that stretched across both countries.

The U.S. need for labor and desire for border control had led to the Bracero Program and continued after the program's end in 1964, with the bulk of migrants coming thereafter as undocumented, outside the bounds of governmental protection and without rights. Since that

[12] Ricardo Villalobos, "come or go," in Bracero History Archive, Item #3208, University of Texas at El Paso Oral History Project, Bracero History Archive, http://braceroarchive.org/items/show/3208 (accessed August 5, 2013).

time, more and more barriers have gone up, and since 9/11, hundreds of miles of walls have been erected. Today, the border patrol is the largest federal law enforcement agency in the U.S., and in the past decade, more people have been deported than in the previous thirty years. More than eleven million people remain undocumented in the United States most of them Mexicans, shut out of the nation's official social and political institutions.

The creation of hard borders and regulation of people have occurred at the same time as neo-liberalism has lowered the barriers for the free movement of capital. Free trade has not come with the free movement of people, a principle of 19th century liberalism that took seriously the right of people to choose their states. Yet, the Washington Consensus in Latin America, especially the North American Free Trade Agreement, undermined local agriculture and industries, leading to increased new migration north from a broader area that had sent few migrants previously. This area encompasses southern Mexico and central America, especially indigenous communities. Between 2009-2014, one million Mexicans and their families have left the US, while 870,000 Mexicans have left Mexico for the US.[13] In other words, net migration is now slightly negative. The Great Recession along with increased enforcement have been the primary motivators, but demographic changes in Mexico could make these patterns permanent. Only time will tell. The U.S. policy of deporting gang members and pursuit of the Drug War, and the collapse of local governance have created new waves of migration from Central America, especially the northern triangle that will continue to challenge officials and official definitions of refugees.

[13] Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, "More Mexicans Leaving Than Coming to the U.S.," *Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trends Project*, November 19, 2015.

Despite the creation of walls, the borderlands remain a fluid zone through which capital, goods, information, ideas, culture, and people cross every day. Latin Americans are now the largest minority group in the United States, 18% of the total U.S. population. Of fifty-five million Latinos, thirty-five million, or 63% of the total, are Mexican or Mexican-American. The efforts of states to keep people out has made migration and migrant life difficult, but has not stopped it, nor is it likely to. After a century of mass migration between the two societies, migrants and ex-migrants occupy positions of authority in both countries. Mexico and the United States are home to each other's largest foreign population, are each other's largest investors, and nearly top trade partners. The foremost transnational tie between communities in these two countries are the people: Mexicans in the U.S. and Mexican Americans who live in Mexico. In Villa Juarez San Luis Potosí, where I began this manuscript, as in many other places across Mexico, a new generation is migrating even as an older one returns home. These transnational ties, begun in the 19th century, expanded upon during the early twentieth century, tested by Depression, governments, and too much tragedy though the twentieth century, continue to shape migration and lives in the twenty-first.

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